

MARY
QUEEN OF SCOTS
ELIZABETH O'NEILL M.A.



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THE
PEOPLE'S
BOOKS

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS



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By ELIZABETH O'NEILL, M.A.

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MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

CHAPTER I

THE GIRLHOOD OF MARY

MARY STEWART is one of the great romantic figures in history. The romance of her life has indeed cast a glamour, which has somewhat shrouded her personality. To some, she has appeared as a saint, to others, almost as a devil incarnate. A saner study of the psychology of her temperament has led the more reliable among her modern biographers to quite other conclusions.

She was born at Linlithgow on the 8th of December 1542. Her father, James V. of Scotland, lay dying at Falkland, and with the news that a daughter and not a son was born to him, his cup of bitterness was full. "It came with a lass and it will go with a lass," he wailed, with a pessimism not accurately prophetic. The kingdom to which the baby princess succeeded, as first queen in her own right Scotland had ever had, had been but a chequered heritage since the accession of James I. in 1423.

The difficulties and dangers which had baffled the efforts of so many Stewarts grew rife again with new complications during the minority of a woman ruler, and Mary Stewart was destined to be added as yet another victim of what was at root the feudal turbulence

of a country but half emancipated from the political institutions of the most chaotic period of the Middle Ages.

The first and third of the five Jameses who preceded Mary on the throne of Scotland died at the hands of rebel barons, the second died under arms, the fourth fell at Flodden, and the last succumbed to fever contracted after the chagrin and exposure of Solway Moss, where the unfaithfulness of the nobles had given victory into the hands of the English. Torn by the rivalries of the great feudal families, weakened by the powerlessness of the sovereign to coerce them, Scotland had never been able to stand alone, but had always been a pawn in the traditional game of rivalry between England and France. That rôle she was still to play. The progress of the Reformation in Scotland added to the complexity of its affairs, and to the difficulties which Mary Stewart had to face as its queen.

The rivalry between England and France for influence over the destinies of the infant queen became immediately intense. Since the marriage of James V. to Mary of Lorraine, better known as Mary of Guise, now queen-dowager, French influence had been strong, and Mary, a woman of some insight and much strength of purpose, was naturally anxious to maintain it. The rough wooing and exorbitant ambition of the English king defeated his ends, and ensured the maintenance of French influence in Scotland for another twenty years.

The regent was the Earl of Arran, head of the house of Hamilton, with claims, after the Stewarts, to the Scottish throne. The tradition of the Hamilton family was to support the French, and, after a momentary swerving to the English cause, Arran cordially joined the queen-dowager and Cardinal Beaton, the primate

of Scotland, in their French policy. Even the Douglasses, the great rivals of both Stewarts and Hamiltons, whose traditions made them look to England, found themselves ultimately alienated by the outrageously aggressive tone adopted by Henry VIII.

After first demanding the custody of the young queen until she should be of an age to marry, and that the strongest fortresses in Scotland should be given over to him, he modified his demands, and on the 1st of July 1543 a treaty was signed, by which Mary was to be sent into England at the age of ten years, there to marry Edward, Prince of Wales. But Scotland was sore against the English, and five months later the treaty was annulled and a close alliance formed with France. Henry's furious reprisals brought desolation to the Border regions, up to the very gates of Edinburgh, but naturally further alienated the Scots. Henry died in January 1547, but his policy was pursued with even blinder violence by the Protector Somerset, whose sweeping victory at Pinkie in September 1547 only served, however, to throw Scotland into the arms of France. French troops were sent, who definitely repelled the English, and the little Queen of Scots was sent to France as the destined bride of the Dauphin, thus with every human prospect of one day uniting the crowns of France and Scotland, and snatching for ever from England the prize at which she had been grasping throughout the Middle Ages.

Mary had spent the first six years of her life in the castle of Stirling, whence she was removed after the battle of Pinkie to Inchmahone for greater safety. Thus the child was, even in these early years, in some sort a prisoner. In August 1548 she set sail for France, the country of her adoption, whose ideals and manners

were to give colour to a temperament naturally sufficiently alien from the sober ideal proper to the new Protestant generation which was in the moulding. Mary may well have inherited her liveliness of temperament from her father, James V., whose joyousness had been proof to the end against overwhelming enmity and violence. Even on his death-bed, having realized the worst, he ceased repining, taking farewell of his nobles with "a little smile of laughter." All the Stewarts knew how to die.

The little queen landed at Roscoff, near Brest, on the 13th of August 1548, after a circuitous voyage round the north of Scotland and the west of Ireland to avoid the English fleet, which was lying prepared to waylay her. Two months later she was received with open arms at St. Germain by Henry II. and his queen, Catherine de Medici. Every one praised the beauty and winsomeness of the child. Even the uncouth Scotch which she spoke came prettily from her mouth. This enthusiasm seems to have been genuine, and justified by the exceptional grace of the child—"the most perfect" Henry II. had ever seen, and whose smile sufficed "to turn all French heads," to quote Catherine, later so bitter an enemy of her daughter-in-law. The little queen was given precedence over the daughters of Henry II., and received every advantage which the brilliant French Court could offer her, as she grew from infancy to womanhood. Always tall for her age and well built like her mother, she inherited the chestnut hair, touched with gold, of her father, and a pale delicacy of complexion, which contrasted well with it, and with the wonderful red-brown, "sidelong" eyes, which were her chief beauty.

Of her beauty there can be no doubt, but it does not

seem to have lain in any exceptional fineness of feature, though all her portraits give the impression of a fair proportion even in these. Hers was the piquant beauty which depends somewhat on form, much more on colour, and pre-eminently on expression. She had in a pre-eminent degree that elusive thing which we call charm, a quality which made the love of her a passion, and embittered intolerably the hatred of her enemies. Elizabeth, whose attractions were of so different a mould, could never forgive her this secret. Above all, the Queen of Scots had a natural distinction of temperament, which was but enhanced by the artificial graces cultivated in the best school of manners (if not of morals) which Europe could afford. ✓

The Court of Henry II., like that of his predecessor, was a typical Renaissance Court, brilliant and refined, artistic, literary, morally corrupt, but with a careful fastidiousness, which avoided coarseness as a shameful thing even in its vice. Opinions have been divided as to the influence which this environment had on the character of so susceptible and intelligent a nature as that of Mary Stewart. Her defenders have pointed out that her moral and religious education was confided to her pious grandmother, Antoinette, Duchess of Guise, but this requires to be proved. It is certain that a girl's standard of virtue must have been rendered easier by her friendship with a recognized mistress of the king, even so decorous a person as Diana of Poitiers. Mary was no fool, and must have accepted, as she grew to womanhood, the flagrant facts of life at the French Court. On the other hand, there were virtuous women at Court, and the ideal of her uncle, the worldly Cardinal of Lorraine, for his young charge, in whom he saw the hope of the Catholic cause, must have been to submit

her to the influence of such as these. Nuns, too, had their part in her education as well as Margaret, the literary and accomplished sister of Henry II. We are told that some of the tapestries which she worked "with wonderful skill" were "dedicated to the altars of God, especially in the monastery in which she was nurtured on her first arrival in the kingdom." The "curriculum" of her studies was that of a typical Renaissance lady, broader than our modern "higher" education of women in the emphasis which it laid on mere "accomplishments" as well as severer studies.

The ideal "product" of the system was at the same time exquisitely feminine and solidly learned. Mary studied languages, speaking Latin fluently, as well as several living tongues. She was musical, and sang sweetly to her own accompaniment on the lute. She wrote poetry, which merited the perhaps indulgent praise of Ronsard and Du Bellay, to whom she afforded inspiration for more notable verse. She danced, too, with exceptional grace, and we may discount Melville's tactful assurance at a later date to the eagerly questioning Elizabeth, that the English queen danced "more high and disposedly." She was always a skilful needlewoman in an age when needlework was a fine art. More notable than her actual achievement in knowledge was her gift of deportment. When at the age of thirteen she declaimed, as was the custom, in presence of the Court a Latin speech of her own composition, she won all hearts, and the Cardinal of Lorraine, reporting on her progress to her mother, told how the king took such pleasure in her conversation that he would talk to her an hour at a time, and she would entertain him sensibly and interestingly, like a woman of twenty-five years. It is certain that Catholicism took deep root in the convictions

and affections of Mary Stewart. Whatever may have been her "crimes," she was sincerely religious—though "spiritual" perhaps only in certain moods of her later years, when purified by suffering.

At the age of sixteen "La ReINETTE," as she was caressingly nicknamed, was led forth an exquisite bride by the Dauphin Francis, a boy a year younger than herself, the companion of her childhood, for whom she seems to have entertained a sincere affection, though it must have been of friendship rather than love. The marriage took place amidst much pomp and rejoicing on the 24th of April 1558. A few months previously Scotch commissioners had come to the French Court to receive pledges that the integrity of Scotland should be preserved, and to arrange the contract of marriage by which the eldest son of the union was to succeed to both kingdoms, or, if it had female issue only, the eldest daughter to succeed to that of Scotland.

The greed of France to secure at all costs her influence over Scotland led to a transaction which has brought much blame on Mary, even thus early. A fortnight before setting her hand to the conditions agreed upon with the Scotch commissioners, she gratified Henry II. by signing certain secret clauses, the gist of which was a promise that Scotland should be virtually subject to France even should no issue be born from her marriage with the Dauphin. What seems at first sight almost unforgivable deceit appears, on examination, as probably but an act of courtesy to her indulgent patron and friend. Probably Mary gave little thought to the possibility that the marriage might be fruitless. She must, too, have realized that her promises were of no value, and the Cardinal of Lorraine, under whose direction she would act, probably advised her to sign as a mere matter

of form. The young queen must have known enough of politics to realize that she had no power to fulfil the conditions of the treaty.

In any case, the rejoicings at the marriage were universal, and in the December of the same year the Scotch Parliament bestowed on the Dauphin the crown matrimonial, and thus the high-water mark of French influence in Scotland was reached, and the balance of parties in Europe seemed determined for years to come. But the frail life of a boy was all that prevented the need of a complete rearrangement. Francis was constitutionally delicate, and in no way a meet mate for Mary. He and Mary succeeded to the throne of France on the death of Henry II. in a tournament on the 10th July 1559. Before many months it was obvious that not only would there be no fruit of the marriage, but that the days of the boy king were numbered.

The year 1559 saw Mary faced with revolution in Scotland, which came to a head some weeks before the death of Francis (6th December 1560) left her a widow, sincerely mourning her husband, and with a natural poignant regret not only for the grandeurs she must put away, but for that country of her adoption which she must leave for her inhospitable and half-barbarous Northern Kingdom. With the death of Francis, the power of the Guises fell for the moment. Catherine de Medici had little affection left for the daughter-in-law who had symbolized it. It was, withal, with heartfelt sorrow that Mary took leave of France and the friends of her youth, and with a premonitory depression set sail from Calais on 14th August 1561 for Scotland and a new life.

1548-58 - France,
1554-60 - wife.

CHAPTER II

MARY'S FIRST YEARS IN SCOTLAND

IT was to a Scotland revolutionary, disaffected, Protestant, that Mary Stewart came, a Catholic queen, on the 19th of August 1561. Her mother had been deposed from the regency in October 1559, and had died in the following June. She had roused the dormant opposition of the nobles by a too open reliance on France. The efforts of the five Stewart kings had made no real change in the relations between the Crown and the aristocracy. The greater nobles had each their feudal following, while the king had no regular force. Even in the royal districts, judicial authority was in the hands of hereditary officials. Parliament consisted of one house, in which the landed aristocracy greatly predominated. The recalcitrants had been, as it were, forced into loyalty by the English aggression after the death of James V., and Mary of Lorraine had used every art to keep them faithful. She granted a certain measure of toleration to the Protestants, whom she had to conciliate to balance them against the enmity of the Catholic but ambitious Arran, who opposed the French marriage in the interests of his own son. Mary obtained for him in 1550 the title of Duke of Chatellerault, and in 1554 he was induced to resign the regency in her favour. Henceforth she occupied the position due to her as the cleverest politician in Scotland,

but the revolutionary element was ever seething and ready to burst forth against any undue manifestation of her Catholic or French tendencies.

Protestantism in Scotland had had a quite different origin from the English Reform movement. Henry VIII. had tried to force it on James V., who could only have been tempted towards it as a political weapon. He must quickly have seen that his choice lay between a struggle single-handed against the nobles or a more even contest with them, supported by the conservative force of the clergy and all who held to the old religion. It was his refusal to meet Henry's views on the subject that led to the fight at Solway Moss, and it was a sure instinct which led the nobles to desert James. James, in fact, actively persecuted the innovators in religion, who were spreading the extremest tenets of Calvin and the Genevans throughout the land. In spite of this fact, or because of it, Protestantism gained ground. The usual strata of the population were reached by it—some clerical, some lay. In 1539 seven persons were burned, and Seton, the king's confessor, himself took refuge in England. Under the regency of Arran the new teaching was at first tolerated, but when the regent joined forces with Cardinal Beaton, the crusade against heresy was carried on with more thoroughness. George Wishart, the pioneer of the Scottish Reformation and the master of Knox, was seized and burned alive by the orders of Cardinal Beaton in March 1546. This excited passions on both sides, and the Protestants took a horrible revenge when they surprised the aged Cardinal in his castle of St. Andrews, murdered him, and hung his body from the battlements. They held the castle for five months, but were at length driven out by a French force, and sent to the galleys in France.

With the others went John Knox, the most striking figure in the history of Scottish Protestantism, and the most redoubtable enemy of Mary Stewart. A man of thirty or forty (opinions differ as to whether he was born in 1505 or 1515), of peasant origin but liberal education, a priest, and acting as such in 1543, he came into notice as one of the most zealous Protestant preachers after the assassination of the Cardinal, and was immediately in the forefront of the battle. "Others sneed the branches ; this man strikes at the root," his hearers muttered. A prisoner in the French galleys for nearly two years, Knox next appears in England as one of the licensed preachers of the new faith. He fled abroad at the accession of Mary Tudor, and took advantage of the liberal policy of Mary of Lorraine to preach for six months in the south of Scotland in the latter part of 1555. On leaving, he wrote a letter to the regent, and constantly sent advice and encouragement to the Protestant nobles. Mary of Lorraine regarded the Protestant movement with a tolerance unique in that age, but the more active policy of the nobles in joining in a "Covenant" and setting up what was virtually a revolutionary government in the Lords of the Congregation in 1557, and the fact that the success of her policy seemed assured with the celebration of the French marriage in 1558, made Mary less conciliatory in her attitude. The nobles showed their disaffection when they refused to take the offensive against England in the war which that country and Spain were waging against France and Scotland. Mary Tudor's marriage with Philip of Spain had been one motive of the Scotch consent to the French marriage, for England was more than ever to be feared when mated with the aggression of counter-Reformation Spain.

The death of Mary Tudor in 1558 and the accession of Elizabeth, however, gave the Protestant party in Scotland once more the chance of English help. Elizabeth, first covertly and then openly, allied herself with the revolutionary nobles. John Knox returned to Scotland in 1559, and his sermons were followed by risings in which monasteries and churches were destroyed by Puritan fanaticism. The condition was now one of war, and Mary of Guise garrisoned Leith with such forces as she could obtain from France, where the Guises were still struggling for power. She died on the 10th of June 1560, and in the next month the Treaty of Edinburgh was signed between Elizabeth's commissioners and the defenders of Leith. By it both French and English troops were to quit Scotland, which left the balance of influence with the English, as the confederate lords were favourable to them. The treaty marked the end of French predominance in Scotland. Another clause provided that the sovereigns of France should cease to bear the arms of England, which Francis and Mary had adopted on the death of Mary Tudor—an act which constituted a protest against the legitimacy of Elizabeth.

The Parliament called by the Lords of the Congregation had things all its own way. The Catholic lords threw in their lot with the others, or stood aside, and in a few days a "Confession of Faith" was at the Parliament's disposal to force upon the nation. The old faith was swept away and a new Church set up on a thoroughly Presbyterian basis. Twenty-four of the most important members of the victorious party were appointed to administer justice and govern the kingdom in the absence of the queen.

Such was the state of affairs in Scotland when Mary

landed at Leith in the August of 1561. She had passed safely without requiring to set foot in England, through which Elizabeth had refused to give her a passport in view of Mary's obstinate resistance to signing the Treaty of Edinburgh. With her were her four "Maries," the children who had gone in her train to France, and had grown up with her there, and three of her French uncles. They were detained outside Leith for several hours by a dense fog, in which Knox saw a manifestation from heaven of "what comfort was brought into this country with her, to wit, sorrow, dolour, darkness, and all impiety." Mary probably merely reflected on the inhospitable climate of these northern regions. Edinburgh was not prepared for her reception, and she had to remain some hours at Leith, the nobles coming out from Edinburgh to pay their respects. Brantôme, the gossipy Frenchman in her train, recounts that when the queen saw the mean equipage which was to conduct her to her capital she wept. He probably transfers his own feelings of disgust to one who was far too finished a lady to give way on such occasion.

The citizens of Edinburgh, ever curious and critical, were either won by the sight of "that sweet face," as the queen rode to Holyrood on the one horse which had been sent to accommodate her (her ladies had to content themselves with mean mountain ponies), or they were glad of an occasion for festival. At all events there were bonfires that night, and "a company of most honest men with instruments of music and with musicians gave their salutations at her chamber window : the melody (as she alleged) liked her well ; and she willed the same to be continued some nights after with great diligence." Thus Knox. Mary was indeed acting tactfully if, as Brantôme gives us to understand, this musical banquet

consisted of the psalms and hymns of an alien and heretical creed, given forth discordantly and adding to the melancholy impression of such an arrival.

The queen, however, soon recovered from her melancholy, if indeed excitement had not prevented depression. She won friends on all sides by her charm and cordiality, and disarmed the enmity of those who had judged and condemned her beforehand. The chief of these was Knox, now wholly given over to theological passion. A grim figure indeed he must have seemed to Mary. The rule of Mary Tudor had turned him against the "monstrous regiment" of women, and it had gone hard with him to pacify Elizabeth on this subject. But his own Catholic queen was doubly distasteful to him, and it was with wrath that he saw men yield to her charm.

But for the question of religion, Mary would have had a better chance than any of her predecessors of putting the relations of the Crown and the nobles on a satisfactory basis. She showed every sign of wishing to be a truly national sovereign, but the religious question was the rock on which her popularity split. On the 24th of August 1561, her first Sunday in Scotland, Mary naturally prepared to hear Mass in her chapel at Holyrood. Immediately a tumult arose among the Protestants, led by the Master of Lindsay, and these would have interrupted the Mass by force, had not Lord James Stewart, Mary's natural brother, barred the passage during the celebration, and had the priest safely "conveyed to his chamber" when it was over. "And so the godly departed with grief of heart, and after noon repaired to the Abbey in great companies, and gave plain signification, that they could not abide that the land which God by His power had purged

from idolatry should in their eyes be polluted again." Mary, ready to tolerate, could have no conception of the spirit which would try to prevent her from the exercise of her personal religion. She exercised it openly and frankly. There were no French troops to protect her, for she did not contemplate the encouragement of undue French influence in Scotland. But her attitude in religious matters was too modern for that age. She herself had to undergo a campaign worked by Knox, in which prayers and exhortations alternated with dire warnings and threats from the reforming pulpits. Daily Knox prayed that God would "turn her obstinate heart, or, if the Holy Will be otherwise, strengthen the hearts and hands of His chosen and elect, stoutly to withstand the rage of all tyrants."

The "rage" was all on the reforming side. Mary preserved an admirable deportment, with a restraint and diplomacy worthy of the best traditions of the Guises—an attitude which only aggravated further a fanatic like Knox. She smiled still on her people, even though their welcoming enthusiasm was tempered by warnings, as when, on the occasion of her first public entry into Edinburgh, a boy of six, "that came as it were from heaven out of a round globe," presented her with a Bible and a Psalter, as well as the keys of the gates, together with some verses, half loyal, half didactic in tone. Then, by way of pageantry, and at the same time tactful suggestion of "the terrible significations of God upon idolatry, there were burnt Korah, Dathan, and Abiram in the time of their sacrifice." This kind of thing Mary had to suffer in all the principal towns of Scotland which she visited in the following spring.

Seeing how strong passions ran on the subject of

religion, she issued only a few days after her arrival a proclamation, pending a further settlement, that no one under pain of death should interfere with the form of religion universally standing at her arrival; and, on the other hand, no one was to molest any of her domestic servants or persons whomsoever come forth of France, under the said penalty of death.

Mary caused Knox to be brought to her, and with sweet reasonableness tried to argue him into a spirit of compromise. She was quite a match for him in argument, but not in invective. The interview ended when she could no longer endure the preacher's wordy oratory against the Church of Rome—"a prostitute sullied with a thousand abominations." This sort of coarseness must have seemed abominable to Mary, the more so as spirituality seemed subordinated in Knox to a mere theological frenzy. His easy rhetoric and racy idiom gave him an immense influence, and who knows how much of egotism mingled with his zeal. His amorousness would have offended the standards of the America of to-day. An old man, he married a child of sixteen.

Life at Holyrood was at any rate gay enough in these first days, and things continued thus without much change for four years. With the best will in the world Mary's enemies could not bring home to her Court the charges of coarseness or vice—a notable fact to the queen's credit. She showed her moderation, too, in her choice of members of the Privy Council. Among the twelve lords who composed it were Catholics and Protestants both, but the chief figures were Protestants, her half-brother, James Stewart, now made Earl of Mar (the natural son of James V. and Margaret Erskine, daughter of the Earl of Mar), and the astute

William Maitland, Earl of Lethington, the cleverest, if the cunningest, man in Scotland, who was made Secretary of State. Lethington's history is closely bound up with Mary's. The motive of his actions is never far to seek. He knew no loyalty except to his fixed idea of anglicizing Scotland and uniting it to England. In this he was at one with Mary at this period, for all through her career the glamour of her English claim was a prime fact to the Queen of Scots.

Of suitors Mary had more than enough from the day of her first husband's death. Immediately four European princes had come forward to press their suit—the Kings of Denmark and Sweden, the Archduke Charles, son of the Emperor, and Don Carlos, son of Philip of Spain. This last marriage appealed to Mary's imagination. As wife of the heir to the vast empire of Spain, she would have occupied a position even more brilliant than that she had lost with the death of Francis. Don Carlos, indeed, was a degenerate, and the marriage would probably have been as fruitless as her first. How far Mary was aware of this we do not know, but the idea of a political marriage was familiar to her, and she does not seem to have been burdened with fastidiousness on the subject. The marriage was a most alarming prospect for both England and France. Elizabeth could not have felt herself safe with Spain ready to support the claims of the Catholic Mary to the English throne against the Protestant daughter of Anne Boleyn. The state of truce in Europe, marked by the Treaty of Le Cateau in 1559, would soon have been reversed, and France would have been no match against Spain, with the added strength of Scotland and the English succession, if not annexation. Even the Guises subordinated their pride in their house to their patriotism,

and worked with their enemy Catherine de Medici against the marriage.

Meanwhile Elizabeth, who had decided to let bygones be bygones, and had adopted a pose of romantic affection for Mary, beguiled the Scottish queen by affecting an interest in the choice of a suitable husband for her. Mary, in some measure deceived into cordial feeling for her "sister" and friend, deferred to her, partly with the expectation that her right of succession to the English throne would be recognized as a reward. Negotiations, however, ended always fruitlessly. The chances of Elizabeth's marriage complicated Mary's. Most eligible suitors offered their hand to both.

Elizabeth was jealous and suspicious, and at bottom hated Mary for the charms she inquired about so eagerly from adroit ambassadors like Sir James Melville, who fooled her to the top of her bent. Melville subtly revenged the compliments she wrung from him at the expense of truth and the Scottish queen by leaving an irresistible picture to posterity of the egregious vanity which mingled so strangely with the masculine traits of this unique character. Her hair, he assured her, was a shade more golden than Mary's tresses, and she danced "more high and disposedly." In reward for these concessions he had the satisfaction of seeing her withdraw Mary's portrait from a cabinet, where she kept it with some others, and kiss it with emotion.

Elizabeth really desired that the Queen of Scots should not marry, or should marry meanly. James Stewart, made Earl of Moray in 1562, was probably equally averse from seeing his sister married. Of the cynical forces which lured or drove Mary to her doom, the political ambition of Moray was not less dangerous

than the religious mania of Knox. Of royal blood, he had an overmastering ambition to rule, only equalled by his greed for possessions—a trait in which he stands in marked contrast with Mary, who was lavish and generous to a fault. Moray was also one of the pillars of the reforming movement in Scotland. He was among the “godly,” probably less from any reasoned conviction than because their severe and gloomy outlook on life and fate fitted his natural disposition. Ten years older than Mary, the queen was disposed to give him the affection and deference due to an elder brother. Moray seems never to have really felt any natural affection for her, and his attitude at this time was as insincere as the “motherliness” of Elizabeth towards the girl who put her trust in them. It was some years before Mary began to suspect the single-mindedness of her brother, and it required extraordinary harshness and unnatural scheming at her expense to turn her love to hate. In estimating the enigmatic and sinister qualities of Moray, the suggestive phrase of Lethington inevitably recurs. When a crime was to be committed to his advantage, Moray stood at a distance and “looked through his fingers.”

In February 1563 occurred the painful Chastelard incident, in which some, though not all, of her enemies have professed to find Mary grievously at fault. Chastelard was a young Huguenot poet of the House of Bayard, a pupil and admirer of Ronsard, and, like all the poets and poetasters at the French Court, a devoted admirer of the Scots queen. He came in her train to Scotland in 1561, and then went back to France, but, drawn irresistibly, soon returned to Scotland, where Mary made him welcome, probably because he seemed to save for her some of the savour of her brilliant period

at the French Court. In any case, her petting and indulgence turned his admiration to passion. Ejected from her bedchamber on the night of the 14th of February, he was ordered from the Court, but returned and made a similar attempt a few days afterwards—an attempt for which he paid with his life at St. Andrews within a week. Knox gives a garbled version of the incident, in which he emphasizes the fact that Mary begged her brother to have the offender despatched and “never let him speak.” The facts probably were that Mary, smarting from the insult, when at the cry of her women Moray appeared, begged him to “put his dagger” in the mad young poet. Moray, with his usual level-headedness, preferred to hand him over to the course of justice. Mary was not in the habit of encouraging adventures of this sort, and even Froude, who has so bitterly warped her story, rejects at least this one insinuation.

It was in this spring of 1563 that Elizabeth brought forward to Lethington, then a messenger in London, a proposal that Mary should marry Lord Robert Dudley, Elizabeth’s own avowed lover and suspected murderer of his wife. Mary entertained the insulting proposal with courtesy, wondering probably, like posterity, what motive dictated it. If Elizabeth was at one moment serious, it may have been that she thought Leicester would never aid and abet the Scottish queen in any designs on the English throne. She may merely, as Mary suspected, have wished to raise him in public esteem as the accepted suitor of another queen, and then withdraw him from the engagement. In any case, Mary never contemplated such a marriage, and Elizabeth herself soon lost zest for the project or the pretence. Some momentary aberration or circuitous prompting had

caused Elizabeth to petition Mary to receive back into Scotland the family of the Earl of Lennox, exiled twenty years before under Mary of Guise—a family which stood next in succession to both the English and Scottish crowns. She must have known that Henry Darnley, the good-looking son of the Earl, was a possible and dangerous husband for Mary. In the following year, when the Lennoxes were about to avail themselves of this privilege, Elizabeth exhorted Mary to retract her permission. A certain exasperation, as well as respect for her plighted word, led Mary not only to refuse this but to receive the exiles with ostentatious favour. Darnley did not accompany his father on his return to Scotland. It was Elizabeth herself who encouraged his return, and in February 1565 he crossed the Border to win and wed a royal bride.

CHAPTER III

THE DARNLEY MARRIAGE

✓ THE Earl of Lennox, father of Henry Stewart, Earl of Darnley, was one of the most factious noblemen of the period, dangerous in his ambitions as standing next in succession to the Stewart throne. His wife, Lady Margaret Douglas, was the granddaughter of Henry VII., through the second marriage of Margaret Tudor to the Earl of Angus. Thus Darnley was the next heir to both thrones—a fact which had been held before his eyes since infancy. He was born during his parents' exile in England in 1545, and was thus three years younger than his royal cousin, whom he had been taught to regard as his appropriate bride. A youth of no special distinction, except in military exercises, exceptionally tall and not unhandsome in an effeminate style, with the yellow hair and fair complexion of the Stewarts of the period, and round, rather vacant eyes, which gave an added boyishness to his face, he could be attractive when his desire was to please, but he had no balance or strength of character and no idea of restraint. Sufficiently tinged with Catholicism to make him acceptable to the English Catholics, to whom the deposition of Elizabeth was always a desirable possibility, he was naturally an object for her vigilance and distrust. ✓ It was, perhaps, with some idea of extricating herself with dignity from the Leicester negotiations

that Elizabeth allowed Darnley to cross the Border and try his luck with Mary. She probably thought that she could mar the marriage proposals if they became serious, as she had done in so many other cases.

Mary had hitherto shown great restraint and deference to the whims of the English queen, partly, perhaps, through her desire to lose no advantage which might ensure her the English succession. She had, however, taken a malicious pleasure in receiving back the Lennoxes and laying stress on her acquiescence in this matter with the wishes of her good cousin, the Queen of England. Throughout her career Mary must often have made Elizabeth wince by this defiance under a suspicious air of innocence. In any case, Darnley came to Mary at an auspicious moment. The hopes of the Spanish marriage were practically over. Mary was wearied with the delays and negotiations of the past four years, the endless deference to Moray and Elizabeth. Though she might sometimes harp in Elizabeth's strain on the advantages of single bliss, she was probably anxious to "settle herself." That she "fell in love" with so shallow a personality it is hard to believe, but that she was pleased with Darnley is evident—"the lustiest and best proportioned long man she had seen." Mary had a great need to give affection, and it is a curious and pathetic psychology which is revealed in her attitude of self-surrender to her husbands. In no case does it seem so incongruous as with Darnley, who seems to have given not even affection in return, and to have taken as his due the condescension of this beautiful and gifted woman.

This spring of 1565 Mary spent at Stirling in festivities, sometimes freakish, and giving her enemies the chance of many a dubious head-shake. In defiance of, or in-

difference to, Protestant opinion, Mary caused Easter to be celebrated with unwonted ceremony, as it were to give yet another expression to the joy and excitement of this pleasant time. The prospect of the marriage alienated many. Although Darnley was a Scotch and English noble both, and Elizabeth had desired that Mary should marry one or the other, the English queen in May sent an order to Lennox and his son to return to England, and forbade the marriage. Her protests at this stage were of no effect. The nobles, like the Hamiltons, who hated the Lennoxes, were hostile; the extreme Protestants, with Knox ever in the van, were averse to one who was for their purposes a Catholic. Moray, after seeming to foster the project, either alienated by Darnley's violence, which had already peeped out on occasion, or with reluctance to give up, as he inevitably must, the power he held while Mary remained single, declared himself against the union. On the 9th July Darnley and Mary were, however, privately married, and it is significant of Mary's infatuation for the project, perhaps too for her lover, that she did not await the arrival of the papal dispensation for which she had applied. On the 28th of July the marriage was celebrated publicly in the chapel at Holyrood.

It was the signal for rebellion, led by Moray, who probably thought that the conditions of 1559 would be repeated, the Protestant party having been fortified by the crusade which had been prosecuted consistently during the period. But Mary's vigorous action confounded his plans. On the 6th of August he was declared an outlaw, his domains were confiscated, and the hunt was up against him, Argyll, and their party. He fled from Glasgow to Edinburgh, where the discreet citizens held themselves behind shut doors, thence to

Dumfries and across the Border, where Mary, exhilarated and triumphant, gave up the chase. She had had occasion before this to give chase to recalcitrants, as to the Catholic Earl of Huntly in 1562, and always she experienced a keen physical pleasure in the hard riding and plain faring attendant on such expeditions.

In England, Moray was received with scant courtesy by Elizabeth, nonplussed by his failure. She lectured him publicly (having rehearsed her part with him privately) on the duties of subject to prince, and then promised to plead for his forgiveness with Mary—a plea which was refused. Mary had about half the nobility attached to her, and she did her utmost to strengthen her party. She released from captivity Lord Gordon, the representative of the Huntlys, so powerful in the north, still in disgrace for their rebellion at the queen's first coming to Scotland.

She now restored to favour also one who was to play the chief part in the next few years of her life. This was James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, head of the great Border family, a violent man, typical of his race, but strong and masterful, "an ugly Scot," yet with the sort of physical attraction which wins women, rough when he did not mean to conciliate, and decided always, of exceptional intelligence and some cultivation—not the mere ruffian he has sometimes been represented. He was a man whose combination of qualities was likely to appeal to Mary, who, in spite of her wit and breeding, was very much the primitive woman. She owed a certain debt of gratitude to Bothwell for the support he had given her mother in her struggle with the Protestants, though he was a Protestant himself. He went in 1560 by way of Denmark to France to get help for the regent, and in Denmark either married or was

legally betrothed to a Norwegian lady, whom he shortly deserted. These things weighed but lightly with Bothwell. After Mary's return to Scotland the feud which had simmered between the Earl of Arran and Bothwell since the regent's time broke out afresh. Knox, curiously enough, was called in to reconcile them, but within three days Arran came forward with the tale of a plot which Bothwell had proposed to him to seize the person of the queen and they two to wield sovereignty in the realm. Arran was at this time on the brink of the insanity to which he succumbed, and he may have concocted the story, but with the rough justice of the time Bothwell was kept a prisoner on suspicion in Edinburgh Castle, whence he escaped in August and fled to France. At the beginning of 1565 he returned, but had to flee again before the wrath of Moray, who hated him because of his former league with the Catholic Huntly against the party represented by Moray, Lethington, and the moderate Protestants. Often it had been whispered that Mary had a partiality for Bothwell, though one marvels at her not resenting his jibe, which must have been reported to her, that she and Elizabeth would not together make one honest woman. However, immediately on Moray's disgrace Mary recalled Bothwell—a man calculated to be very useful to her in the crisis to which her affairs were passing.

Had Darnley shown himself in any way equal to his fortunes, Mary would probably have weathered the storm, but he soon proved only a source of weakness. He showed himself immediately after the marriage for what he was—foolish, idle, but inordinately ambitious, anxious to have his part in affairs without any of the irksomeness of attention to business. Mary, herself so

keen and alert, soon lost patience. At first demanding from Elizabeth that her husband should be recognized as king, she soon dropped the subject. She had proclaimed him king the day before their public marriage, but she took no steps to have the "crown matrimonial" bestowed on him according to her promise. After a time she had a stamp of his signature made, so that it could be formally appended to documents when necessary. At first Darnley alternately stormed and sulked, and later took ignoble revenge by writing to the Pope and the Catholic powers, complaining of her lukewarmness in the religious campaign. Mary ignored Darnley's request that the governorship of the Border should be given to his father (who was totally unfitted for it), and gave it into the strong hands of Bothwell. The English ambassadors ignored Darnley, the others for the most part snubbed him. Moray in his flight had dropped some cowardly insinuation against Mary's virtue, and Darnley chose the moment when the queen was declared to be with child to express suspicions of her relations with David Riccio, her Italian secretary. How far Darnley was sincere in this hardly matters. There is no evidence to support him. Mary's relationship with Riccio resembled that with Chastelard, except that it had more of solid friendship in it. He had come to Scotland with the ambassador of the Duke of Savoy, and his ability as a musician recommended him to Mary, who soon made him her secretary for her French correspondence. As she became more and more alienated from Darnley, she naturally took comfort in the pleasantness of those near her. Riccio had encouraged the marriage with Darnley, and seems to have had no grudge against him; but Darnley attributed the queen's aversion from him to the growing

influence of Riccio, which was patent to all. It has been said that Mary contemplated at this time the restoration of Catholicism in Scotland, and that she was persuaded by the Cardinal of Lorraine to join the league of the Catholic powers against the Protestant cause in Europe. She wrote to Pope Pius V. to ask for funds for the Catholic propaganda. How far she intended to use these exclusively for the cause is, of course, problematical. The question of her political projects at this time is involved in that of her relations to Riccio. It is possible that she had come to the conclusion that there was no chance of compromise between Catholicism and Calvinism, and to Riccio she could confide projects that no Scotchman could abet. Lethington even was alienated, and wrote to Cecil of the necessity to "chop at the very root."

The nobles, even those who had hitherto remained faithful, grew uneasy, and the young king's discontent was an obvious weapon to their hands. In traditional Scotch fashion a "band" was signed, not ostensibly against Riccio, but with the avowed intention of preventing the confiscation of the estates of the fugitive lords and their outlawry, which Mary intended, for she was an implacable foe when her blood was up. Darnley, for his share, was to have the coveted "crown matrimonial," which involved the actual exercise of kingship and the right to rule alone if Mary died, which had been formerly granted to Francis II. But the unavowed intention was uppermost, and Randolph, the English agent, wrote to Cecil, "Riccio will have his throat cut within ten days." Moray signed the band, though he was not to arrive (he was returning in defiance) at Edinburgh until after the murder. The Earl of Morton, "a red Douglas," a murderer and

adulterer, though a communicant and prominent among the "godly," signed probably from religious motives and as a relative of Darnley, as were also the grim old Earl of Ruthven and Lindsay. The rebel lords—Argyll, Glencairn, Rothes, Boyd, and Ochiltree—had an obvious motive for joining. Who originated the band and the exact part played by each conspirator is matter of controversy. Strangely enough, the victims, Mary and Riccio, had to the last no suspicion of the intended violence.

On the evening of the 9th of May 1566, at eight o'clock, the queen was at supper with Riccio, and the Countess of Argyll, in the small "boudoir" which opened from the queen's bedroom. A neighbouring door in the bedroom itself gave access to a small spiral staircase which led to Darnley's apartments immediately below the queen's. It was by this staircase that Darnley led his band of ruffians to surprise the queen and seize Riccio. First Darnley appeared, and the queen made room for him on the couch where she sat alone with Riccio facing her. With what feelings of surprise or what degree of cordiality she received her unaccustomed visitor does not appear. Almost immediately the face of Ruthven, pale with illness and excitement, appeared at the door, and Mary at once realized the treason. Quickly she turned on Darnley with the withering epithet, "Judas!" To the queen's inquiries as to his business there Ruthven made rough reply; Riccio cowered in terror behind Mary, and Ruthven sternly forbade the three gentlemen-in-waiting to lay hands on himself. To do so was hopeless, for the armed band now burst in. Darnley held the queen in his arms to prevent her moving, the table was overturned, and, but for the candle seized and held aloft by the Countess of

Argyll, the room would have been in darkness. Ruthven tore the Italian's hand from its frenzied grasp at Mary's skirts, and the victim was dragged, shrieking, into the chamber of presence adjoining the bedchamber, and there brutally buffeted and stabbed to death. His body was hurled down the staircase. Huntly, Bothwell, and other members of the queen's party heard the tumult, but the cry of "A Douglas" resounded, and they knew they were no match for the moment for the queen's enemies. So they stole away in the hope of communicating secretly with Mary, and effecting her escape. For she was now virtually a prisoner. All that night she paced her apartment, full of misery, outraged and indignant, and full of pity, too, for Riccio, though nothing in her grief or the words she let fall would indicate any closer tie between them, such as the king affected to suspect. Even her women were kept away, until on Moray's return next day the queen, somewhat relieved with weeping, her quick mind having concocted a policy, allowed herself to be persuaded by him to contemplate a pardon of the offenders. Mary did not know at this time the part Moray had played in the plot. She seems to have been relieved to have a kinsman near; and in these earlier days Moray seems always to have succumbed in her presence, and granted her the courtesies of which a Ruthven or a Morton would have deprived her. She declared that she was ill, and begged for the services of a midwife. Her women were allowed to return, and thus means of communication with her friends were contrived. After the first wave of passion had died down, Mary saw that her policy was to divide her enemies. It required small effort on her part to win Darnley away from his confederates. The next night they were content to leave

her in his charge on the understanding that on the following day a signed and sealed pardon should be delivered to them. In the dead of night she and Darnley stole through the subterranean passages of the palace, through the graveyard, where the newly made grave of Riccio troubled Darnley and embittered Mary, to where three gentlemen awaited them with horses, on which they rode off, nor gave rein until they reached Bothwell's stronghold of Dunbar.

The assassins, when they found the queen gone, knew that the game was up. Mary had the policy to issue a pardon to all but those who had taken an actual part in the murder. Moray would have held to Morton and his party, but these refused his magnanimous offer, probably realizing that it would be well to have a friend at Court. Within a week Mary rode in triumph into Edinburgh with Bothwell, Huntly, and an imposing cavalcade. She avoided Holyrood, and took up her quarters in the Castle. Her political schemes had fallen to pieces, but she was awaiting the birth of her child, and was not all unhappy. The most irritating figure on her horizon was the husband who had suspected and betrayed her, now feverishly anxious to inculcate some minor actors in the tragedy. In return, the nobles, who hated and despised him, were careful that Mary should not be spared the knowledge of any detail of his treachery.

CHAPTER IV

THE DARNLEY MURDER

ON the 19th of June 1566 Mary gave birth to a son in Edinburgh Castle, and James Melville galloped south to bear the news to the English queen, who received it with a characteristic cry of poignant jealousy: "The Queen of Scots has a fair son, and I am but a barren stock." The birth of her child immensely strengthened Mary's prestige, but she does not appear to have taken any maternal delight in the child, "only too much" the son of Darnley, as she informed her husband, probably with reference to some physical weakness or defect. In the will which she had thought it well to draw up before her accouchement, Mary had shown some melting towards Darnley, or perhaps merely a sense of duty, in leaving him some among her treasures, including "the ring with which he married me." But with returning health her dislike for him seemed to increase, and at the same time her affection for Bothwell. She had sent him to guard the Border before the birth of her child, knowing that she could trust him not to play into English hands at this critical time. She kept Moray and Argyll at the Castle, probably feeling that they were best under her eye. Bothwell had been married the previous autumn to Lady Jean Gordon, the sister of the Earl of Huntly, an unwilling bride, for she loved Ogilvy of Boyne, who fell to the share of

Mary Beaton. The queen had encouraged Bothwell's marriage, for it was well to cement in friendship the two lords on whom she could most rely. It is improbable then that Mary at this time loved Bothwell. Her passion seemed to grow upon her after the birth of her child, and then when Lady Jean had learnt to love her husband she was fain to accept divorce with the consolation of substantial financial compensation. Bothwell was much in the queen's company during her convalescence, accompanying her to Alloa, where she was the guest of the Earl of Mar. Lethington was also regaining her favour, and this autumn at length married Mary Fleming. Mary Livingstone had been the first of the Maries to marry, and the queen had now only Mary Seton, who remained with her, saving intervals, almost to the end.

In this same autumn, Mary being at Edinburgh, staying at a house in the Canongate, Darnley followed her to the city, but took another lodging. He spread reports that, driven by the queen's unkindness, he would take ship and sail off to France or Flanders. Mary caused him to be summoned before the Privy Council, to which she invited the French ambassador, and there, with an appropriate attitude of mingled meekness and dignity, asked him to declare his grievance. Darnley preserved a not undignified demeanour under the circumstances. Only dislike of him could have been Mary's motive in the proceeding, and he took leave of her, with the assurance that she should not see his face for a long space.

In October the queen went to hold a justice eyre at Jedburgh, and on her way heard that Bothwell had received a severe wound in a Border affray with a robber. Whatever her feeling of anxiety, she gave

herself up to the business in hand for a week, and then one day, accompanied by Moray and others, she rode to Hermitage Castle to see the Earl, and back again the same day—small matter for the scandal which afterwards grew around this incident. Next day, either through over-exertion or excitement, Mary was violently ill—indeed like to die—and before she was better Bothwell had been borne in a litter to Jedburgh to lighten her convalescence. Darnley concerned himself little in the matter. That winter at Craigmillar the lords assured Mary that the agony of detestation for her husband which was embittering her life would soon have an end. The question of divorce came up, but that was to endanger the legitimacy of her son. It was Lethington who gave her assurance: "Madam, soucy ye not; we are here of your grace's nobility and council that shall find the moyen that your Majesty shall be quit of him without prejudice to your son." The most feasible plan was to arrest Darnley for treason, and—this was an aside—to kill him if he resisted. The plan was deferred until after the baptism of the prince, due on the 17th of December, and then rumours leaking out made it impracticable.

The baptism, performed with all the pageantry and ceremonial that Catholic ritual and Court magnificence could bring to it, was in some ways the supreme moment of Mary's life. The Queen of England and the King of France stood sponsors, the former sending a font of gold. Mary lost the sense of her unhappiness in her zest to make things go well. The king was in the castle, but not present at the baptism. The story goes that he had no suitable clothing in which to appear, evidence of Mary's "stinginess" towards him, an accusation which is quite unfounded. As a matter of

fact he feared to meet the English ambassador, not enduring the denial to him of the title of king. Rumours of the "band" against him were flying about, and the pardon issued to Morton and the assassins of Riccio confirmed his worst fears. On the 24th of December he fled to his father's house at Glasgow, falling ill of smallpox on the way, a disease quite common at the period, and from which, in the insanitary conditions of life, not even the greatest were immune.

It was not until the 14th of January that Mary sent an offer to go to see him, and received in answer the brutally discourteous reply that he "wished Glasgow might be Hermitage and he the Earl of Bothwell as he lay there, and then he doubted not she would be quickly with him undesired."

In face of this Mary journeyed to him, and in her presence, weakened by sickness, he seems to have grown timorously affectionate, pleading that their old footing might be restored. Mary, without committing herself, steeling herself against the pathos of his reiterated plea, "I am but young," bore him back with her to Edinburgh and to his doom. Haunted by fear, he yet seemed fascinated by some force in Mary, and put himself wholly into her hands. He was lodged in a small, two-storeyed house in the square attached to the ruined collegiate "Kirk o' Field," just within the walls of Edinburgh, so that its back door opened on the wall. The house was in disrepair, and had been hastily furnished. Mary's pretext for her choice of the situation was that she could be near her son, and yet not bring the infection too near. The house seems to have been chosen for her, for she was making her way to the larger building occupied by Archbishop Hamilton, the only house of importance in a district of decrepit

cottages and squalid lanes, where thieves lurked. The house to which Darnley was borne stood on arched vaults, and the lower storey consisted of a hall and a room, where Mary slept for some nights. Above was Darnley's room with two cabinets for his chamber boys. Here Darnley was to be nursed back into health by Mary, and, judging from a letter written by him to his father three days before his death, she showed some softening to him—a fact which would seem to aggravate intolerably the dastardliness of his betrayal. Another letter purporting to be written by Mary from Glasgow to Bothwell, the famous Letter II. of the "Casket Letters," gives the only possible psychology, whether it be forgery or not, and it is now but a forlorn standpoint of the inveterate defenders of Mary which denies its authenticity. Hating Darnley as she did, Mary's conduct in this matter is of too grim a duplicity to fit in with what we know of her character. On the other hand, it is almost impossible to believe in her innocence. That she knew of the plots against him is established beyond denial, and her moral complicity is involved in her failure to warn him, and in her exposing him thus inevitably to the designs of his enemies. In fact Mary's actions in those days could only be explained by an extreme stupidity if she was genuinely reconciled to Darnley—and Mary was never stupid—or she was playing a deliberate part to ensure the full success of the plot. "You make me dissemble so much that I am afraid thereof with horror, and you make me almost play the part of a traitor. Remember, that if it were not for obeying, I had rather be dead. My heart bleedeth for it." Her mental conflict was severe, but Mary on the night of the 10th February took a tender farewell of Darnley, and rode off into Edinburgh to a masked ball,

in honour of the marriage of her valet, Sebastian Page, which had taken place that day. That evening, even while she sat with Darnley, bags of gunpowder had been carried from Bothwell's apartments at Holyrood, and placed either in Mary's room or in the vaults below the house. In the small hours a terrific explosion startled Edinburgh, and it was soon known that the Provost's house at the Kirk o' Field had been blown up, and that the king was dead. His body and that of Taylor, his servant, who shared his room, were found at some distance from the house. It was not the explosion that killed them. They were probably strangled; by whose hand actually is not known. Morton, whose recall Bothwell had encouraged in the hope that he would play the part he had done in the Riccio murder, had refused. His presence in Scotland in fact only served to reinforce the party of Moray in the attack on Bothwell, which the queen's unbalanced favours to him were bound to cause. Bothwell himself and some dozen of his followers were on the scene of the murder. They stole back to the palace, and were ready to be informed of the nature of the "crack" in due time. It may have been the hand of Mary's lover which made sure of the death of her husband.

Mary seems to have received the news without any attempt to feign too realistically a grief she could not feel. The only record we have of her deportment shows her eating a boiled egg with Bothwell in whispered conversation within the curtain of her bed. Far more damning than this preservation of her appetite is the fact that she took no steps to discover the murderers. She gave the lesser actors time to save themselves, and on Bothwell she showered every favour. Guilty or not,

in face of her previous attitude towards Darnley any attempt at such ceremonious mourning as had marked the death of Francis would have been absurd. But Mary went to the opposite extreme. Probably to relieve and distract her thoughts, she indulged in much show of spirit and merriment, spending most of her time at the place of the Setons, some miles from Edinburgh on the Firth of Forth, whither Bothwell naturally accompanied her. This was partly to avoid Edinburgh, full of rumours, the populace awakened to some feeling of loyalty, born out of pity, towards the dead king. Anonymous accusations, chiefly against Bothwell, were placarded in the city. Before long the name of Mary appeared too. The old Earl of Lennox demanded justice, and Mary after some demur gave him a date earlier than he wished (thus, as he pointed out, hampering him in preparing his case) for the judgment of Bothwell, whom he accused. On 12th April Bothwell rode jauntily forth with a body of his armed retainers to stand trial in a court over which presided the Earl of Argyll, one of his accomplices in the crime. It was a parody of justice. Old Lennox did not even dare to appear, and the demand of the servitor whom he sent to beg for delay was ignored. Bothwell was acquitted on technical grounds, which hardly constituted a moral victory. The subsequent Parliament confirmed the finding, and confirmed, too, the grants which Mary had made in profusion to Bothwell, for he was greedy and she generous. Besides lands and office, she gave him gifts of a more personal character, cutting up precious coverings and altar-cloths, which had belonged to her mother, to fashion for him articles wherewith to bedeck his person. It is the saddest part of the tragedy to which Mary was being blindly led by her infatuation

that the passion was chiefly on her side. Bothwell was ambitious, greedy, flattered, but he had a real hankering after the sad, pale young wife, whose quieter attractions held him as the more brilliant qualities of Mary did not. Lady Jean Gordon was the one woman to whom Bothwell was in some sense faithful, and it was a terrible sting to Mary that he visited her even after the divorce had been pronounced, which made possible Mary's union with Bothwell. This was on the 3rd of May. On the 19th April Bothwell had given a supper to many of the chief nobles, and when they were well in their cups he had terrorized them into signing a request that he should marry the queen. It profited him little, for not one sincerely supported him. Lethington was bitter against him, for he saw that his crude ambition would inevitably undermine the political position which he and Mary had built up. The next day Mary went to visit the young prince at Stirling, and on her return on the 24th, six miles from Edinburgh, she was intercepted by Bothwell with an armed band, who carried her off, ostensibly an unwilling prisoner, to Dunbar. It was a feat of which Bothwell was quite capable in earnest, but all the world knew that it was a farce. Lady Jean's divorce was a necessary preliminary to the marriage with Bothwell which could alone save the queen's honour under such compromising circumstances. In due course Bothwell took Mary to Edinburgh, where she published the fact that, though the Earl of Bothwell had done her a violence, she was prepared to forgive him, and indeed to marry him.

Thus did Mary Stewart from a blind passion, unworthy of her higher qualities, make wreck of her life. Yet it is this weakness, or rather madness, the domination of the woman over the queen in one who was so much

the queen, that has given her so romantic a hold on the interest of posterity.

As it was, Mary enjoyed for the moment a brief space of happiness, chequered by the falseness of her position, and surely, too, by the unworthiness of her passion. Jealousy there was on both sides, for it was Bothwell's natural attitude to the women he favoured, and for Mary there was always Lady Jean with the dispensation locked up in a coffer, for the nominal absence of which the Catholic tribunals had nullified her marriage. Mary was married to Bothwell with Protestant rites on the 15th of May 1567. It was a sad function. That very day Mary broke out into wild expressions, saying she would kill herself. She must have felt bitterly the absence of Catholic rites, and again even her reckless passion could not blind her to the dangers she was risking. Her relations with her husband were uneasy in these first days, but in the weeks before their bubble burst they were "quiet and merry together."

The situation was, however, impossible. The nobles had absented themselves from the marriage, and prepared for revolution. Argyll and Huntly alone supported Bothwell. Moray was, according to his custom, absent from a scene where too early action might compromise him. He had left Scotland before the trial of Bothwell, going first to England and thence to France.

The nobles had early in May made a "band" to free the queen, preserve the prince, and revenge the king. Bothwell was thus signalled out as alone responsible for the murder in which, of course, some among his accusers had taken part. Stirling, the home of the prince, was chosen as the headquarters of the revolution, the nobles thus gaining an immense advantage. Bothwell and the queen left Holyrood to go to Borthwick

Castle for greater safety. The castle was surrounded on the 10th June, but Bothwell got free and rode to Dunbar. The next day Mary, in male attire, eluded her none too vigilant captors, and followed him. They issued a summons to their subjects, and had soon a following of 1600 men. They posted themselves on Carberry Hill, and the forces of the confederate lords, more numerous and more united, came out to meet them.

Much time was spent in parley. Bothwell offered to decide the quarrel in single combat. He showed great nerve if no tactical skill, and the lords were chary of attacking the person of the queen. She seems to have been awaiting reinforcements from the Hamiltons in the west, but as the day wore on these had not appeared, and the queen's army was melting away. The real aim of the nobles was to separate the queen from Bothwell, and she, sacrificing herself, consented to put herself under their protection on condition that he was allowed to escape. She had no idea of the extent of her sacrifice, and, bitter though the parting was, as with one last embrace Bothwell rode off to Dunbar, she could not guess that she would never look on his face again.

Carberry Hill closed a brief and stormy chapter in Mary's life. For Bothwell it definitely negated his bold venture for power. He seems to have had little regret for the queen, though it is difficult to imagine a feasible policy for him. He soon saw that he could hope for nothing in Scotland, and so sailed off to his dukedom of the Orkneys, which Mary had bestowed on him the day before their marriage. He became a mere pirate, but some of his vessels were captured, and he himself took refuge in Denmark, where he was thrown into prison, and died ten years later a raving lunatic.

Mary's first thought in the period which followed was to communicate with him, but time and sorrow and the bitter knowledge of his indifference cured her passion, and this passage of her life must have seemed to her later, as it does now to us, something in the nature of a bad dream. On such a subject it is, of course, impossible to dogmatize, but in her later years and in the face of death she seemed to hark back to her earlier affections. She would have desired to be buried at Rheims beside her mother, for whom she had had a peculiarly deep affection, or beside her first boy husband, Francis II. But Mary, meanwhile, had to face a long martyrdom.

Suddenly her world was changed from one where love held sway to one where hatred and reviling met her on every side. As her captors bore her along with them to Edinburgh, the very soldiers reviled her with hideous and disgraceful epithets. The formal courtesy which had marked the day's negotiations fell away, and Mary realized that she was a prisoner. A banner with a gross picture of the corpse of the murdered king, with the little prince kneeling at his side praying to heaven for vengeance, was flaunted before her all the way, and in the streets of Edinburgh the mob joined the soldiers in a hideous tumult of reviling. She was lodged that night in the Provost's house, and when early next morning, realizing at length the extent of her misery, she appeared dishevelled and frenzied at her window to make some appeal to the people, she was repulsed by the sinister banner waving full in her face. She requested an interview with Lethington, who declared that she asked only to be put in a ship with Bothwell, and let drift whither fortune might lead them. But Mary could never have been trusted to play such

a part. Some of the lords were inclined for an immediate trial and execution of the queen; the majority desired to hold her in captivity, and their policy won the day. From the Provost's house Mary was escorted to Holyrood, but, when the citizens had withdrawn within doors, she was hurried off in the night to her prison at Lochleven. In the county of Kinross, the most Protestant in Scotland, the castle stood on a rock in the middle of the lake, a mile from any shore. Here lived Sir William Douglas, a relative of Morton and Ruthven, with his wife, the former mistress of James V., and mother of the Earl of Moray. They were likely to prove strait keepers for Mary. Here, in the small tower of three superimposed rooms on the rampart at the opposite angle to the larger tower occupied by the Douglasses, Mary was to remain a prisoner for eleven months. The rooms were wretchedly lighted, heated, and ventilated. The aim of the lords was to induce her to consent to a divorce, but they soon saw that this was hopeless. Mary declared that she was with child, and obstinately refused. It is said that she gave birth prematurely to still-born twins while at Lochleven. Her consent was then to be obtained to the coronation of her son, and, failing this, she was to be charged with the crimes of tyranny, incontinency, and the murder of her husband, of which they now declared they had proof in her own handwriting, the first reference to the Casket Letters.

The lords had things their own way, for Europe was shocked and aghast at the murder of Darnley and the reckless folly of Mary's subsequent course of action. To Elizabeth's lectures on the duty of subjects towards their princes they turned a deaf ear. Mary, weakened by the prostration which had come upon her at her

first arrival at Lochleven, signed on the 24th July an act of demission (being assured by the two Melvilles that it could not morally or legally bind her). Five days later the infant prince was crowned at Stirling, and Knox had the satisfaction of preaching the sermon. He and his like were very busy in these days "preaching hot cannons" against the queen. They clamoured, indeed, for her death, but it was not to the interest of many of the lords that she should face a public trial. Mary looked forward to the return of Moray, which took place in August, but she had little to hope in that quarter. His own account of his interview with her shows him merciless, grim, and godly, playing on the jarred nerves with his calm recital of her offences and her folly until he in some sort demoralized that brave spirit. The death which Mary feared was burning at the stake—the penalty for husband murder. On the morrow, grateful for the assurance that he would preserve her life and honour, she begged Moray to accept the regency, which he did with some show of reluctance, and to his dishonour he took care to have his action ratified by Parliament in words which asserted Mary's guilt as matter of certainty. The feudal forces had once more triumphed in Scotland. The cynicism of the attack on the queen for a crime in which so many of her accusers were themselves involved finds illustration in Scotch history for many a year. An accusation of having had a hand in the murder became the readiest weapon against an enemy, and Mary rejoiced at the tidings that Morton had perished on the scaffold, nominally for the very crime of which he and his friends had made her the scapegoat. With her formal resignation of the Scottish Crown, Mary Stewart's political career in the larger sense was over. She might hence-

forth be used as a pawn in the game of European politics, or as the hope of desperate English Catholics, but the false step of the Bothwell marriage was her undoing. The latter part of her life, spent in prisons, relieved by phantom plots and delusive hopes, stands in marked contrast to the earlier part with its rapid action and breathless change.

CHAPTER V

THE CASKET LETTERS

LIFE at Lochleven was cheerful and placid enough if somewhat monotonous. Mary, in excellent health, embroidered and read the romances which she loved, and meanwhile won the romantic hearts of youth and charmed even the soberer spirits like the Lady of Lochleven herself. The preachers were wont to add to the epithets of murderess and adulteress that of "witch" in their abuse of the fallen "Jezebel," but her "witchery" arose from her natural charm and her remarkable instinct of adapting herself to those whom she desired to please however these might differ in character. The two young Douglas girls who shared her room were entirely enamoured of her, for Mary drew the hearts of women as of men. George Douglas, a young man, and Willie Douglas, a fourteen-year-old boy, were soon equally pledged to her service. At one moment Moray suggested a marriage for Mary, thinking that his regency might have a freer hand with the queen free but impotent. It is said that Mary suggested, whether seriously or not, George Douglas as an acceptable husband, and Moray, taking fright, had him immediately removed from Lochleven. In any case, it was the romantic devotion of the young man which led to his removal. From afar he devoted himself to her cause, and there were all the possibilities at

this time of Mary once more forming a party. The Hamiltons would support her if she escaped, and there were always the faithful Setons, Flemings, and Livingstones. With Bothwell gone from the scene, the Catholics could conscientiously rally to her cause. The severe rule of Moray with its theocratic tinge was disliked. He was too stern and capable a ruler to please those even who had set him up, for they were the forces of disorder. On the 25th March 1568 Mary made an attempt to escape in the garb of a friendly laundress who had come to the castle from Kinross, but her beautiful white hands betrayed her, and the boatman put back. The cleverness of Willie Douglas at length effected her escape. Serving at supper on the evening of the 2nd May, the boy stealthily withdrew the keys of the castle from the table, where they lay of custom beside the laird's plate, and shortly after a "servant" woman put off in a boat for the mainland. The page accompanied her, and George Douglas, of the little band who awaited her at Kinross, was the first to kneel before his queen. There were, too, John Beaton and the Laird of Riccarton, a friend of Bothwell. Four miles further on they were joined by Lord Seton, and later by Lord Claude Hamilton with an armed force. The little band took horse for Niddry, Lord Seton's place, where Mary stayed an hour or two and wrote letters and despatches. From Niddry, she rode across Scotland to Hamilton. A lurid proclamation exists, in which Mary is said to have given full vent to her pent-up indignation against the "hell-hounds" who had constrained her, and especially against the "spurious bastard" Moray. It was probably never circulated, for a much milder manifesto went abroad. It has been pointed out that Mary had no such command of

Scotch as would enable her to throw off such an effort in the pressure of such a crisis, and though she was not without a touch of Tudor coarseness, which manifested itself in certain moments of anger, she must have realized the undignified character of such a composition. It was probably the work of the disreputable Archbishop of St. Andrews, and expressed the grudge which the Hamiltons had against Moray and Lethington. The Hamiltons were but indifferent friends to Mary. They were now, as always, playing their own hand, and had planned to foist themselves into power by marrying the queen to one of their house, Lord John Hamilton. Moray was at Glasgow when he heard the news of the queen's escape, and elected to stay there, the stronghold of the Lennoxes being a not unsatisfactory basis. Mary's was but a forlorn hope, for Moray's party was still strong, and he could count on brain and skill at arms, while the faithful who held to Mary were marked more by the traditional chivalry of gentlemen than by any practical ability. Mary's object was to gather a large force and make her way to Dumbarton, whence she might pass to France and get help. The Hamiltons were anxious for an engagement, hoping for the complete overthrow of Moray. Mary feared to fall into their power almost as much as into the hands of Moray.

As it was, time was wasted in proclamations and in parleys, which Moray was willing to contemplate while reinforcements were gathering for him from all sides. As soon as he could count on 4000 men he broke off the negotiations. Mary had 5000 or 6000, but they lacked unity, and Moray knew this. He posted himself between Hamilton and Glasgow on the road which Mary would traverse in her ride to the west. From

sloping ground behind the village of Langside, a village of one street stretched along the road, he attacked the queen's forces as they came up. Kirkcaldy of Grange acted as commander-in-chief for the regent's army. There was no plan on the other side. The splendid cavalry under Lord Herries were hampered by the nature of the site. The Hamiltons fought fiercely, but confusion was caused by the sudden illness of the Earl of Argyll, who was leading the main army. His Highlanders broke and ran. On the regent's side but one was killed, while several scores of Hamiltons lay dead, and three hundred prisoners were taken. After all, the battle mattered little if Mary could but have got to Dumbarton and thence to France. This Moray knew as well as she, and the pursuit was so hot immediately after the battle that the plan was abandoned. Mary's escort broke up to deceive her pursuers, and she galloped for the Border. Lord Herries pressed her to remain among the Maxwells, but Mary refused. He pointed out that it was still open to her to go in a week or two by sea to Dumbarton, but she chose another course. She crossed the Border to throw herself on the protection of the sister queen whose voice had been raised in strong and constant protest against her imprisonment. Crossing the Solway from Dundrennan in a fishing-boat, she arrived at Workington in the evening of the 16th of June. The defeat at Langside, when she had so much in her favour, must have been one of the bitterest experiences of her life, but she was now in some measure consoled, for the Catholic northmen showed her sympathy and honour. Mary had written to Elizabeth from Dundrennan, and word came that she was to be conducted to Carlisle Castle, whence in July Elizabeth ordered her to Bolton Castle, under the keepership of Sir Francis

Knollys, a kinsman of the English queen, and withal one of the most honourable and finished gentlemen of the period. He had no liking for his office of gaoler, but his courtesy could do little to assuage the bitter disappointment of this tragic queen on finding herself once more a prisoner, shut in by a relentlessness which happily she could not yet measure.

Mary's conduct in putting herself in Elizabeth's power has puzzled many, but it was not characteristic of the Stewarts to act wisely in a crisis, and Mary was, above all things, impetuous. It was a very feminine trait in her, that optimism which always expected things to turn out in her favour. She made the fervour of her desires the measure of the likelihood of their fulfilment. It must be remembered, too, that Elizabeth's protests against the lords' treatment of her had all the ring of sincerity. She resented an attack on the immunity of princes, but her embarrassment was immense on finding the injured queen, the natural successor to her own throne, the hope of the English Catholics, at large within her borders.

At the first news of Mary's escape Elizabeth had sent her heartiest felicitations, and gave instructions to her messenger, Leighton, to make every effort to assist in the queen's restoration. In point of fact this was the only politic course for Elizabeth in view of the European situation. The alternative of allowing Mary to seek help abroad was too dangerous a menace to the balance of power. Matters took quite a different complexion with that false step of Mary over the Border. It was to Elizabeth's advantage now to detain Mary in England, and to so depreciate her in the eyes of the world that foreign powers could not resent her action, and would be chary of interference. It was a charac-

teristically cynical plan which Elizabeth conceived, and it was carried out with that consummate relentlessness under the guise of single-mindedness which made Elizabeth the despair of the diplomats of the period. Mary was urgent to be admitted to the presence of Elizabeth, there, we gather, intending to disburden herself of all her tale, probably confessing her fault, but at the same time discovering the double-dyed duplicity of her accusers, who had made her a scapegoat for their own guilty ambition. This would not have suited Elizabeth. Mary was too much a genuine victim to be allowed so public an opportunity of manifesting her wrongs. To her gracious pleading Mary received the insulting reply that, much as the queen desired to meet her wishes in this matter, care for her own reputation demanded that she should postpone the pleasure until Mary had cleared herself of the charges brought against her. Assuming the position of overlord, she graciously gave assurance that she would be as careful of Mary's life and honour as Mary herself could be; and before she had time to receive Mary's indignant protestations that she would own no judge but God, the English queen wrote off to Moray reproving him for his "very strange" course of action, and assuring him that Mary was "content to commit the ordering of her cause to us," and inviting him on his side to make full confession to her. There might have been some justification for this assumption of authority had Mary in any sense made appeal to Elizabeth; but she had come for help and not for judgment, and with dignity now she demanded her right to depart and seek assistance elsewhere. Naturally this was refused.

Elizabeth seems to have been moved at moments with some sort of desultory pity for Mary, or it may

have been part of her consummate acting. In any case, when she had the opportunity of showing a delicate act of courtesy which could in no way have prejudiced her, she stooped to a piece of vulgarity which amazed as well as outraged the Queen of Scots. Mary had written to Elizabeth frankly informing her of her need of clothing, as she had but the things in which she had made her journey. Sir Francis Knollys had the pleasant task of presenting the parcel which came in answer. He was aghast on opening it to find that it contained nothing "but two torn shifts, two small pieces of velvet, and two pairs of shoes." Mary was at first silent, but Knollys, humiliated, murmured what excuse he might about the stupidity of the maid who had packed the parcel, transparent excuses to which Mary, however, to set him at ease "answered courteous and took it in good part." It could hardly have been Elizabeth's parsimony which dictated such conduct. It looked like a deliberate insult. Mary, whose generosity was proverbial, who frequently lent her most precious jewels and most gorgeous apparel to her ladies when they wished to make *grande toilette*, must have been outraged. Fortunately Moray, in answer to her letters, in July sent on her own clothing, and Mary Seton, "the best busker of a woman's hair to be seen in any country," as the queen herself appreciatively remarked, had arrived in June to supervise her mistress's toilet, which was to the end with Mary that important and elaborate ceremonial which the best traditions of feminine elegance at the period approved.

Sir Francis Knollys, an elderly and discreet man, proof against Mary's feminine blandishments, which amused him, conceived, however, a genuine admiration for her. His oft-repeated description of her, as

giving a vivid picture of the more obvious traits of her character and bearing, may be quoted once again. "This lady and princess is a notable woman; she seemeth to regard no ceremonious honour beside the acknowledging of her estate regal: she showeth a disposition to speak much, to be bold, to be pleasant, and to be very familiar. She showeth a great desire to be avenged of her enemies; she showeth a readiness to expose herself to all perils in hope of victory; she delighteth much to hear of hardiness and valiancy, commending by name all approved hardy men of her country, although they be her enemies: and she concealeth no cowardice even in her friends. The thing that most she thirsteth after is victory, and it seemeth to be indifferent to her to have her enemies diminished either by the sword of her friends or by the liberal promises and rewards of her purse, or by division and quarrels raised amongst themselves: so that for victory's sake pain and peril seemeth pleasant unto her: and in respect of victory, wealth and all things seemeth to her contemptible and vile. Now, what is to be done with such a lady and princess, or whether such a princess and lady be to be nourished in one's bosom? or whether it be good to halt and dissemble with such a lady, I refer to your judgment."

Elizabeth was prepared to run these risks, for to halt and dissemble was of the essence of her character and policy. In spite of the personal rancour against the Scots queen, which Elizabeth's suave assurances could not conceal, the motive which dictated her course of action was purely one of expediency. She could never forget that Mary considered herself the rightful queen of England. It would be dangerous to allow her to go abroad: almost as much so to allow her

to return to Scotland ; and even to detain her in England was not without its risks. This last was, however, the most likely course of action, and if Mary could only be sufficiently disgraced in the eyes of the Catholic lords, who had shown so strong sympathy with her at her first coming into the North of England, she might be rendered quite harmless, and one irritating element would thus be removed from the life of the English queen.

As Mary was so emphatic in her refusal to accept "judgment," Elizabeth now proposed that a Commission should be appointed, before which the whole case should be laid as a sort of court of arbitration. That was Elizabeth's strong point—the "whole case"; for the whole case, as far as the Scottish lords would disclose it, must, she knew, be damaging to Mary's reputation. Mary was induced to consent to this by a shameless promise which Elizabeth never meant to fulfil. Even if the lords could show some cause for their action in deposing Mary, she should now be restored on condition that her "lords and subjects should continue in their state and dignity." If they could not show due cause, Elizabeth would ensure her restoration, by force if need were. On the other hand, Mary must renounce her title to the English throne, abandon the French alliance for a league with England, and also join the Anglican Church. And so the Catholic Mary received an Anglican chaplain and demurely listened to his instructions, deceiving nobody thereby.

To Moray a different set of promises was tendered. If Mary's guilt was proved, she was to be deemed unworthy of a kingdom ; and if only suspicions were proved, then she was to be restored in such a way as to obviate dangers of relapse. On this understanding the Com-

mission of Inquiry met at York in the first week of ¹⁵⁶⁸ October 1568. The history of the "process" (for the proceedings had all the appearance of a process of justice, with the cardinal injustice that the accused might not appear in her own defence) is one of confusion and cross-purposes. Of the English Commissioners perhaps two were out to sift the truth. The Duke of Norfolk was already linked with Mary—even contemplating marriage with her as a future possibility. Mary's chief Commissioners, Lord Herries and Bishop Leslie, were anxious to hush things up, having no faith in her innocence. Even Moray was afraid to show his hand completely, lest some tortuous move of Elizabeth's policy might suddenly lead to Mary's restoration, in which case, having shown himself implacable, his sister would naturally do likewise. Lethington was moved by both fear and hope to prevent too full a disclosure. Mary had threatened that she had wherewith she might hang him, probably referring to a paper given to her by Darnley after Carberry Hill, perhaps the "band" signed by the lords against Darnley. Again, Lethington was always faithful to his ideal of the union of the two kingdoms, and a marriage between Norfolk and Mary was a step in this direction. He and Norfolk had proposed to Mary and to Moray a compromise by which Moray should retain the regency, Mary confirming her abdication and remaining in England enjoying a pension from Scotland in addition to that which she received as dowager from France. It was arranged that Moray, in answer to Mary's accusations against him of rebellion, should merely plead the Bothwell marriage. The danger of the more serious charge being given public form was thus seemingly removed, but Moray consented to show the "Casket Letters"

privately to the English Commissioners. Norfolk urged Mary to withdraw her agreement with the plan of compromise. At this point Elizabeth accused Norfolk of undue meddling with Mary's affairs, and brought more force to bear on Moray to render the whole thing public. Against Lethington's will the letters were therefore laid before the Commission on its removal to Westminster in November. Mary, seeing at length the trend of Elizabeth's policy, had instructed her Commissioners to break off negotiations if the procedure took the form of an accusation against her, unless she were allowed to appear in person. The Commission certainly took this form when, on the 29th of November, the old Earl of Lennox was allowed to appear as an applicant for justice for the murder of his son. Mary's Commissioners accordingly withdrew; but the Conference proceeded none the less. The full case against Mary was laid bare, and thus Elizabeth's end was gained. To make assurance doubly sure, the evidence was read over in the presence of some of the chief nobles summoned to meet the Privy Council on the 16th December at Hampton Court. The proceedings were brought to an end by a characteristic pronouncement, a futile conclusion to a disgraceful parody of justice. On the 10th of January 1569 Elizabeth declared that nothing had been brought forward against Moray and his party "that might impair their honour or allegiance." On the other hand, nothing had been "sufficiently proven or shown by them against the Queen, their sovereign, whereby the Queen of England should conceive or take any evil opinion of her good sister for anything yet seen."

Meanwhile Mary was a prisoner, and the hopelessness of her plight was emphasized by new arrangements

being made for her accommodation. She was removed to Tutbury Castle, in Staffordshire, a dreary unhealthy place, from which the representations of her new gaoler, the Earl of Shrewsbury, obtained her removal to Wingfield.

The Casket Letters have played a larger part in controversy than they did in deciding the finding of Elizabeth's Commission. Mary's moral complicity in the Darnley murder rests on evidence quite other than these, and, after all, this is the important fact to the historian or biographer. True, if Mary could be certainly proved to have written the letters, this would be cumulative evidence of her guilt; if she could be proved not to have written them, this would not be proof of her innocence. Nevertheless, the controversy has an interest of its own, and some indication of its nature may be given. According to the sworn declaration of the Earl of Morton, a silver casket was delivered up under torture by George Dalgleish, a servant of Bothwell, on the 26th of June 1568. On the next day it was broken open in the presence of several lords, Catholic and Protestant, whose evidence as to the nature of the documents then in the casket is therefore beyond suspicion. It contained eight letters and a sequence of verses, loosely described as "sonnets," purporting to have been written by Mary to Bothwell between January and April 1567. The most important of these is the letter described as Letter II., undated but apparently written from Glasgow, when Mary was there nursing Darnley. It gives vivid, and, it may be added, characteristic expression of the queen's passion for the earl; it recounts, as lovers' letters will, all sorts of minute and indifferent things. It more than glances at the horror of a contemplated crime, which could be

nothing else than the murder of Darnley. It shows us Mary's innermost shrinking mingled with passionate yielding. Some who have turned hopelessly away from the arguments and counter-arguments on the subject of the authenticity of the casket documents have accepted them as Mary's on the grounds that no forger could have caught so subtly the psychology of such a character in such a crisis, and there is much to be said for this position. Certain it is that the work could not have been done in the one night during which the casket was in Morton's possession. Dalgleish is known to have taken it from Edinburgh Castle on the 19th. If it had been tampered with while in the castle, it must have been with the knowledge of Sir James Balfour, the keeper for Mary and Bothwell. Of the lords, later suspicions and even his own dubious attitude on several occasions would single out Lethington as the deviser of the forgery, if forgery there was. Lethington had an interview with Balfour at Edinburgh Castle on the 14th of June. Morton and he were dining together on the 19th, when the news came that Dalgleish and two other servants of Bothwell had entered and left the castle. They were hunted out and the casket secured on the 20th. The alternative to believing that the forgery was done on the night of the 20th is that it was executed between the 14th and 19th. When the crowded eventfulness of those few days is remembered, the achievement, requiring careful supervision by one acquainted with all the facts, seems impossible. Mr. Andrew Lang, long contending for the theory of at least partial forgery, has now reluctantly been convinced of the authenticity of the letters, and he gives what seems morally certain proof for his conclusion. One outstanding fact in the evidence is the remarkable

verbal similarity between a declaration made by Thomas Crawford, one of the Lennox servitors, as to the conversation which passed between Darnley and Mary at Glasgow and what purports to be Mary's own account of that conversation in Letter II. It has been thought that the letter, or parts of it, must have been copied from Crawford's narrative; but the identities are possible if Darnley reported the conversation immediately to Crawford and Crawford made immediate notes of it, as seems probable from other evidence. Mr. Lang has now pointed out that there are certain differences between the matter and arrangement of the two accounts which almost certainly proves their independence of each other, and therefore the authenticity of the letter. For example, the letter recounts how Mary had asked Darnley "why he would pass away in the English ship," and shows Darnley denying the impeachment, "but he grants he spoke unto the men." The Crawford account shows Darnley giving a longer and defiant answer, saying "if he had, it had not been without cause, considering how he was used. For he had neither (means) to sustain himself nor his servants, and need not make further rehearsal thereof, seeing she knew it as well as he." Here, it would seem, is a big difference between the two stories; but on closer examination it will be seen that Mary reverts to this defiance of Darnley, it having slipped her memory or her pen in its appropriate place. Her account of the conversation appears in paragraph 7 of the letter. In paragraph 18 she has: "He spoke very bravely at the beginning upon the subject of the Englishmen." So that the inference is that Crawford reported the conversation in its natural sequence, while Mary gives the same tale by returning to the subject on two different

days. The device is too far-fetched to ascribe it to the wiles of the forger. The question as to whether the French originals were produced before the English Commission can hardly now be settled. Certain it is that they have entirely disappeared, and it has been plausibly suggested that James I. caused them to be destroyed, a pious act which is evidence rather for than against his belief in his mother's guilt. Another cogent argument for the authenticity of the letters is that Mary never sufficiently insisted on their falseness, nor did any of her friends. Naturally, she denied them, as she denied the letters she certainly wrote in connection with the Babington plot, as she denied so much that must be laid to her charge in the plots and counter-plots which sum up the history of the last years of her life.

Carlisle
Bolton (Knollys)

Rutbury
Wingfield
Sheffield

Wingfield

Rutbury (Paulet)

Chauncy

Wingfield

Chauncy
Wingfield

CHAPTER VI

ENGLISH PRISONS

At the end of 1569 Mary was again removed from the beautiful manor of Wingfield to the Earl of Shrewsbury's stately seat, Sheffield Castle, where the greater number of her remaining years were spent. The earl was a sufficiently indulgent gaoler within the bounds of prudence. According to the state of Elizabeth's feelings did he relax the conditions of imprisonment. The conduct of Lady Shrewsbury, the famous "Bess of Hardwick," was also a fairly reliable weathercock as to the degree of favour or disfavour in which Mary stood, though she, unlike her husband, acted mainly from self-interest. In the first years of Mary's long captivity, she derived much amusement from Lady Shrewsbury's spicy anecdotes about the morals and manners of Elizabeth and her court. Later a bitter estrangement took place between the two women, and Lady Shrewsbury unscrupulously accused Mary of too great familiarity with the Earl, an insinuation so entirely without basis, that not even Mary's enemies deigned to clutch at it. As a matter of fact, Mary found none of the romantic devotion which had been enkindled in the hearts of her Scottish gaolers. Her English keepers were more chivalrous but less impressionable. In a small way, Mary maintained her court all through these long years of imprisonment. As Knollys has left on

record, she was a great stickler for the respect due to her royal state. Of custom, she sat as royal persons did, under a dais. She was surrounded by French and Scotch servants and dependents, some dating from her old days in Scotland—she had always a Fleming and Seton in her service—some chosen for her by her uncles of Guise, who gladly did her this service, though the exigencies of the political situation prevented their ever giving any serious attention to the question of her freedom. It was from her French pension that Mary paid her servants, the number of whom also varied, according to the favour or disfavour in which their mistress stood. There was often question of reducing her household to thirty or even sixteen. More often it stood at fifty, and even rose, it is said, to eighty. It is pathetic to think of such indulgence in open-air pastimes as hawking being looked upon as a special favour for Mary, who loved all outdoor sports, and whose love of personal freedom was singularly intense. She had the satisfaction of refusing to defray the expenses of her own and her household's actual nourishment, and Shrewsbury had to supplement from his own resources the all too meagre allowance which Elizabeth made him for this purpose. It was wonderful how Mary, even when her French pension was decimated by mismanagement or embezzlement, contrived to maintain pensioners and give gifts. It is, perhaps, not the very loftiest trait this love of giving, but it is a royal and attractive quality. Even to Elizabeth, in moments of softening, Mary sent gifts of her own contrivance, articles for personal adornment, fashioned from precious materials worked and sometimes devised by Mary herself. All during these years she spent hour after hour in needle-work. Elizabeth never sent any gift in return, and at

length had the shamefacedness or the bad grace to send a warning to Mary, with something of grim humour in it, that as people grew old they "took with two hands and gave with but one finger."

Mary spent great part of her time in a voluminous correspondence, and much of her income was consumed in paying agents to carry her letters secretly to their destination. Many of these letters remain, eloquent declarations of her wrongs and her aspirations. Of these she wrote as she spoke, freely, and it is pathetic to find the same themes ever recurring. In the first years of her imprisonment, strangers were admitted fairly freely to her presence. She enjoyed the novelty of a new face, and patiently paid for the privilege of such a conversation as Mr. Nicholas White, an agent of the English Government, reports himself to have had with her, by listening courteously to the lecture which he thought it appropriate to append.

Elizabeth soon put an end to this liberty. People found the Scots queen too attractive; and even a Burghley, when it was necessary that he should treat with Mary, was solemnly warned by Elizabeth to be on his guard against her charms. It is consoling to remember that Mary had that attractive gift which is more often found with strong and highly-wrought temperaments than with more ordinary natures—the power of taking delight in simple things. "Besides reading and working, I take pleasure only in all the little animals I can get," she wrote in asking for some "pretty little dogs" to be sent to her from France. She lavished affection, too, on a small grandchild of Lady Shrewsbury, Bess Pierrepont, who shared her room and seems to have been petted, corrected, and generally "mothered" by Mary in a simple and charm-

lots. { great conspiracy
Babington -

ing way, the queen choosing and making her frocks, and later writing caressingly to her as "ma mie." Once a year, at least, Mary had a change of scene, going to Chatsworth or to Sheffield Lodge, and even to take the baths at Buxton, a privilege which she appreciated with pathetic intensity. During the greater part of her captivity, she was allowed to have a Catholic chaplain in her service, so long as his office was not openly avowed. As the years went on, she seemed to depend increasingly on the consolations of her religion, and there was an element of justification in her claim that she was suffering for its sake. Elizabeth's deep-laid plot to disgrace Mary in the eyes of her co-religionists had not been altogether successful, for the Scots queen became the ideal of the English Catholics, as later she was revered as martyr in their cause.

The first of the Catholic plots in her favour was the Ridolfi plot, bound up with the proposals for the Norfolk marriage which had come up even previous to the conference at York. The scheme of a marriage between Mary and the head of the English nobility was one which appealed to many of the English nobles, who, in spite of their loyalty to Elizabeth, were irritably anxious to have the ever-present question of the succession settled. Their hope was to have religion in Scotland settled on the same basis as in England—under joint sovereigns. Norfolk, a man of vague but large ambition, no nerve, and mediocre talents, was not the husband to appeal to Mary. It is doubtful whether once free she would have married him. She encouraged him and wrote cold, dead letters, trying to catch the submissive tone in which she had naturally written to Bothwell. The impediment of the Bothwell marriage was removed when Rome declared it null on the ground

of rape. It is certain that the only religion Mary would have consented to impose, if such a policy were possible, on the two countries was Catholicism. Norfolk fondly hoped to gain Elizabeth's consent to the marriage, but when the plan was actually disclosed to her at the end of 1569, she immediately consigned him to the Tower. In spite of his messages of caution, the Catholic lords of the north rose in one of those ill-conceived and worse-organized rebellions which, occurring at intervals throughout the Reformation period, illustrate the hold which Catholicism and the old order still had on the conservative north. 1569

It was as usual easily stamped out. The gallant Earl of Northumberland, who had led the forlorn hope after the solemn celebration of Mass in Durham Cathedral, restored for a day to the old cult, fled after his defeat to Scotland, whence Moray delivered him to Elizabeth, against all the traditions of international hospitality. It was almost the last act in Moray's cynical and enigmatic course, for in January 1570 he was assassinated by Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh, and Mary rejoiced with the hate of a primitive nature, and graciously paid a pension to the assassin. 1570

After this date the history of Scotland until the accession of James is more flagrantly feudal. The old Earl of Lennox succeeded as regent, only to fall, he too by the hand of a Hamilton, in September 1571. Mar then became regent, and it is significant that Elizabeth was ready to deliver Mary up for execution to this most ruthless of all her enemies, if only the Scotch would absolve her from complicity in the affair, a condition which Morton was too cautious to allow Mar to accept. Morton was shortly to succeed to the regency on the death of Mar. Knox went to his reward on the 24th of 1571

November 1572. Lethington had been arrested by Moray in September 1569 for complicity in the Darnley murder. The real motive of the move was political disagreement. Kirkcaldy of Grange succeeded in freeing Lethington and removing him to Edinburgh Castle, which he still held for Mary, defying the authorities until, in May 1573, Morton, with the aid of Elizabeth, forced the surrender of the castle, the last stronghold of Mary's cause. Shortly afterwards Lethington died, and thus Mary saw nearly all the chief actors in the great drama of her life removed.

With Morton as regent there was, of course, no hope for her from Scotland. The failure of the Ridolfi plot in 1572 damaged her cause in England. Norfolk had been freed, after a good scolding, in August 1570. It is probable that he would have preferred to leave Mary to her fate, but some curious sense of honour mingling with his incorrigible ambition made him play with fire. His correspondence with Mary was continued, and he gave ear to a plan by which Spain was to co-operate with an insurrection of the English Catholics to place her on the English throne and restore Catholicism. The intermediary between the nations in this largely conceived but impracticable plot—impracticable because of the inveterate hesitancy of Philip of Spain—was an Italian banker, Ridolfi. The thing could not escape Burghley's infallible system of detection, and Norfolk paid penalty with his life, declaring his loyalty to Elizabeth at the last, and mournfully soliloquizing on the sinister fate of those who meddled with Mary Stewart. Mary fell into a "passion of sickness," but it was rather from agitation and vexation at the untoward course of events, than from any real affection for the prospective husband she had never seen. Both

houses of parliament advised Elizabeth to let the Scottish queen share in Norfolk's fate, but she had the policy (it is impossible to believe it magnanimity) to refuse. The immediate results to Mary of the plot was the reduction of her household to sixteen. She was forced to part with some of her most valued and trusted servants, including Willie Douglas, the page who had delivered her from Lochleven, and served her ever since. The servants who remained to her were not allowed to go beyond the gates of the castle, or to speak to the servants of the Shrewsbury household. Mary's outdoor exercise was reduced to an occasional walk on the castle leads. Her character at this time shows outward sign of that inner purification which suffering was sure to work on so strong a nature. Definitely she put from her all pretence at compromise with Anglicanism, and defiant, bitter, and unregenerate as she could still show herself, she seems to have definitely accepted her sorrows as coming from the hand of God. On the last night of her life she asked her women to read to her of a great sinner repentant, and it can hardly be doubted that Mary accepted her sufferings as a deserved, if terrible purgation. For the next eight years her secret correspondence dwindled. One ray of hope illuminated this time. It came from the dreams of ardent Catholics that Mary should be freed from prison by Don John of Austria, the hero of Lepanto, and a fitting mate for the Scots Queen. Don John died in 1579; but it is more than doubtful whether Philip would have countenanced any scheme which would have pushed his too popular brother into undue prominence. Another piece of news arrived prematurely to Mary in 1576 of the death of Bothwell, which really took place two years later.

Mary in these years was half an invalid prematurely

ageing, worn out with deferred hope. It is significant that an attack of prostration always followed the renewal of negotiations for setting her free, with which Elizabeth kept her in suspense to the end. There was in these years one other pretendant to her hand, her cousin, the Duke of Guise, son of Duke Francis, the most attractive of Mary's uncles. In this young man all the traditional Guise ambition was strong as he contemptuously stood by the throne on which the degenerate Valois rapidly succeeded each other. In the person of Guise, France was at last to take an appreciable step towards the liberation of Mary; but it was by way of the plots which led to her destruction.

By the year 1580 conditions had somewhat changed and time seemed to be working in Mary's favour. Her son was grown to manhood, and much might depend on him. The counter-Reformation was in full tide. The leaven of the Jesuit propaganda was doing its work in England as in Europe. James, it was thought, might be won by it. D'Aubigny, a Lennox Stuart, the subtle agent whom Guise had attached to James, meanwhile affected to be converted by the young king to his views of religion. D'Aubigny fomented the ill-feeling against Morton which delivered him over to death at the beginning of 1581, ostensibly for his complicity in the Darnley murder. Mary had consistently refused to give her son the title of king, and there was question of his dividing the sovereignty with his mother. But the glamour of power dazzled James, as it had dazzled Moray, and in 1585 a formal treaty, in which Mary had no part, between the Scotch king and Elizabeth, gave tacit assurance of Mary's definite exclusion from power.

Meanwhile the Catholic plot, if such a name can be given to the wide schemes of the counter-Reformation powers, was in progress. Jesuits travelled through Scotland as through England, enlivening the faith and reviving the hopes of the Catholics. They were, for the most part, more skilled in religion than in politics, and, in spite of the Jesuit tradition, it must be said of them that they made clumsy plotters. Mary and Mendoza, the brilliant ambassador of Spain, were the only really distinguished brains engaged. Guise was in league with Philip, in despite of his own government. Philip was determined to strike at England, but he was waiting for what he might judge an infallible opportunity. It has been suggested that with Mary alone between himself and his claims to the English throne, he was not altogether zealous to seat her upon it. The "Raid of Ruthven" in 1582, when James was kidnapped, and the ultra-Protestant party in Scotland came into power, was a check to the Catholic plans. A letter which Mary wrote to Guise, advising that French troops should be sent into Scotland by Dumbarton, was duly captured by Sir Francis Walsingham. He regularly received copies of her letters to France at this time from a clerk in his pay at the French embassy. Walsingham was a more redoubtable and inveterate enemy to Mary than even Burghley. His spy system was perfect, and his subtle method of inventing false plots, and fomenting real ones, was only too sure for Mary's purposes. The immediate result to Mary now was the tightening of her bonds. In the next year the Catholic Sir Francis Throckmorton was arrested, and, after being put to the torture three times on the rack, revealed the heads of the plot. As a result, Mendoza was expelled from England. At the same time, rumours ran that the

Catholics aimed not only at the deposition, but also the death of Elizabeth. It was at the beginning of 1584 that Lady Shrewsbury spread the cruel slander about Mary and her own husband; and perhaps because of the estrangement between the two women, perhaps because of the increasing fear of Catholic plots, Mary was in the September of this year removed from Lord Shrewsbury's charge and sent to Wingfield, where she was in the keeping of Sir Ralph Sadler, an honourable man, but less likely to show sympathy and indulgence. Mary was terribly annoyed by the imputation, but for long her petition to Elizabeth to take some action in the matter was ignored. At length Mary wrote to her French friends on the subject, intimating her resolve, if satisfaction were not given to her, to put on public record the tales about Elizabeth which the Countess of Shrewsbury had so freely poured into her ear. A terrible letter exists in which Mary did indeed with all the bitter power of her clever tongue, hold up the mirror to the English queen. It was never delivered. Probably Mary thought better of it, or Cecil intercepted it. It is valuable as showing what Mary was capable of in anger even yet. Her threats had the desired effect, and Lady Shrewsbury had to eat her words.

At this time the famous "Bond of Association" was drawn up by which the nobles and magistrates of England pledged themselves to pursue to the death any pretender to the crown of England in favour of whom a plot to devise the death of the Queen of England should be formed. Mary was thoroughly disheartened at her recent realization of the part her son was playing, and at the treachery of Patrick, Master of Gray, who had succeeded D'Aubigny as the agent of the Guise party at the court of James. He was the handsomest

man of the day, and had gifts which won the friendship of Sir Philip Sidney, but he played a dastardly part towards Mary. It did not require a long stay in Scotland for him to discover that the "Great Conspiracy" would have no success. Gray veered with the tide, and when he came into England in 1584, it was not, as Mary fondly hoped, to communicate more closely with her on this subject, but to make terms with Elizabeth involving the desertion of his mother by James. Incidentally, Gray placed in the hands of the English Government the threads of the Catholic plot. These were, however, already known, and not even Mary's voluntary offer to join the Bond of Association or her letters to her friends abroad telling them to cease all effort in her behalf could pacify Elizabeth. When the full measure of James's indifference and treachery was apparent, Mary cursed him with a mother's curse. He was, after all, only too much the son of Darnley. A further offer to Elizabeth to renounce the cherished succession to the English throne was ignored, and in January 1585, a sinister order was given for Mary's removal to Tutbury, the prison which she had found so hateful sixteen years before. In the following April, Sadler was ordered to yield his charge to Sir Amyas Paulet, the last of Mary's gaolers, and the only one who misused his powers. He was a Puritan of the most repellent type, dull, brutal, full of brutish hate for all that Mary represented. Walsingham had come to the point when he determined to destroy Mary, and Paulet was a suitable and willing accomplice to the scheme.

The story of the Babington plot, which was Mary's final undoing, shows us the sinister side of the rampant patriotism of the Englishmen of the period. It was

not so much Elizabeth's hatred as Walsingham's dread of a Catholic sovereign which determined the course of action now taken against the Queen of Scots. As though to goad her to desperation, she was cut off from all communication with the outer world. All her correspondence was to go through Walsingham's hands. The alms she had given to the poor daily in the neighbouring town were forbidden, and petty persecutions abounded. The plan which lured her to her destruction was briefly this. She was to be deluded into believing that she could safely and secretly take up the threads of the Catholic intrigue. Rightly it was calculated that her late sombre experience would make her more eager. She was to be lulled into a sense of security, and to be led on to write things which would bring her within reach of the penalty threatened by the Bond of Association, and so she was to be done to death, and the Protestant succession secured to England. Walsingham's machinery for deciphering and forging must be supplemented by traitorous agents, and such a one was found in Gilbert Gifford, a pupil of the Jesuits, and a member of a loyal Catholic family. He was bound to be beyond suspicion, and he consented to play the traitor. Mary was removed in the autumn to Chartley, a manor-house neighbouring the home of the Giffords, so that, the district being familiar, the "agent" could come and go without suspicion. He managed to communicate with Mary through a brewer, who delivered letters in a water-tight box in a barrel of beer. Naturally he received the appropriate replies. Gifford himself proposed to Mendoza, to Archbishop Beaton, Mary's ambassador at Paris, to Morgan, her confidential agent, a plot for the assassination of Elizabeth, and returned to London duly accredited. He put himself in relations

with Antony Babington, a young gentleman of a Catholic Derbyshire family, who had in 1571 been serving as page in the family of Lord Shrewsbury, and probably while there saw and admired the Scottish queen, for whom his Catholic traditions must have given him a sympathetic leaning. There was, perhaps, a romantic devotion, like that of another page, Willie Douglas. His religion did not prevent his being an acceptable figure at court later, but he seems to have been impressed and sobered by the preaching and death of Edmund Campion, the most human and most exalted of the Jesuit martyrs. He was ripe to listen to such a plot as that now disclosed. He did so, and engaged a band of young men among his friends to join the conspiracy. Some of them were in the immediate entourage of Elizabeth. Six of the chief conspirators were to perform the actual assassination. Mary was to be freed, and a general rising arranged in her favour. The Duke of Parma was to bring the foreign arm of invasion. Meanwhile Babington was put in communication with Mary. She was asked for some assurance. She gave it. In how many, if any, words, she approved the actual assassination will never now be known. Her moral complicity is beyond doubt, and the minor question of whether the wording of the letter quoted against her was authentic or forged has all the difficulties of and much less importance than the controversy over the Casket Letters. The evidence on this subject brought against her at her trial consisted of the decipher made by Phellipps, the agent of Walsingham. The original was never seen again, and among Mary's papers at Chartley no minutes of the letter were found.

Mary was suddenly removed from Chartley to Tixall, a neighbouring seat, while her papers were ransacked and even the jewels and portraits which she treasured were carried off to Elizabeth. Her two secretaries, Nau and Curle, were arrested as the queen and her party were setting off for the unwonted pleasure of a day's hunting, to which she had been invited merely as a ruse. The arrest warned Mary that something had been discovered, and the day's pleasure was, of course, abandoned. Instead of taking her back to Chartley, Paulet took her to Tixall. Full of apprehension and uncertainty, which, to one of Mary's highly strung temperament, was much harder to bear than knowledge of the worst, she spent the most miserable fortnight that perhaps she had ever known. She was allowed only the attendance of two women, and the visits of her equerry and apothecary, Bourgoign, an old man in whom she put much trust. When she had seen that she was being led away from Chartley, Mary had got down from her horse, and sat on the ground refusing to stir. She feared, and she knew not how just her fear was, some sudden swift stroke of death; but the apothecary obtained from Paulet a formal assurance of her safety, and Mary at length yielded to his persuasions. It was at Tixall that she is traditionally supposed to have written the tender and pathetic Latin verse:—

“ O Domine Deus speravi in te !
 O care mi Jesu nunc libera me !
 In dura catena, in misera poena desidero,
 Languendo, gemendo, et genu flectendo,
 Adoro, imploro ut libereres me.”

Which Swinburne translated:—

“O Lord my God,
I have trusted in Thee ;
O Jesu my dearest one,
Now set me free.
In prison's oppression,
In sorrow's obsession,
I weary for Thee :
With sighing and crying,
Bowed down as dying,
I adore Thee, I implore Thee, set me free !”

On her return to Chartley on the 26th of August, her household wept with joy, for they had feared not to see her again. She went immediately to visit the wife of Curle, who had just given birth to a daughter. She comforted her as best she could, and in the absence of a priest, for she had been deprived of her informal chaplain, she baptized the child, giving it the name of “Mary.” She had to suffer the indignity of giving up what money she had, chiefly a sum she had reserved to leave to her servants at her death. Paulet and a stranger came into her bedroom to demand it—to prevent her having funds for conspiracy, so they explained. In September, Babington and six of his companions suffered the revolting death of traitors at Tyburn. As news of the project against the queen's life had spread through England, patriotism had burst out at panic heat, but the appetite of the London populace for bloodshed was soon surfeited, and the second batch of criminals were hanged. Under torture Nau and Curle agreed that the original letter written by Mary to Babington was “much the same” as that read to them, viz. Phellipps' version. It was now deemed safe to attack the arch-plotter Mary. Elizabeth was doubtful as to the advisability of a formal trial of a sovereign person. It

was a dangerous precedent; but Burghley convinced her that since Mary's abdication at Lochleven she had no right to these royal privileges and immunities. The opinion of the European powers weighed little with her at this point. Philip could not be more bitterly estranged than he was already. The King of France was too weak at home to interfere in favour of his sister-in-law, and James, alas, had too much to hope and fear from Elizabeth to dare to defy her from mere filial duty. On the 25th of September Mary was removed to Fotheringay, there to await her "trial."

CHAPTER VII

FOTHERINGAY

ALTHOUGH Mary Stewart would own no judge but God, "to prove her goodwill" she consented to answer on the one point of having plotted against the life of Elizabeth. A commission, chosen from among the peers, members of the privy council, and judges had been appointed on the 5th of October 1586, and on the 14th Mary was brought to trial before them in the great hall of Fotheringay Castle. Nine of the commissioners, including Shrewsbury, dared to absent themselves, but they signed their names to the verdict later. She was conducted to the hall by Bourgoign, her apothecary, and Andrew Melville, and as the commissioners uncapped at her entry she swept the ring of faces with her eye. Instinctively she felt their hostility, and with feeling murmured to Melville, "Alas! so many councillors and not one of them for me." She protested, too, against her seat not having been placed under the dais, and reminded them that she was an independent sovereign, like their own queen. The two days' "trial," and especially the first, was a disgraceful exhibition. Instead of keeping to the one point on which Mary had consented to answer, the commissioners bullied, interrupted, and reproached her, determined not to give her a hearing. The legal members were especially rabid, in the end forgetting to question and merely hurling

statements and accusations. She denied, of course, her knowledge of the intended assassination of the queen, though she owned her negotiations with foreign powers on the subject of her liberation. She had no one to conduct her defence, but with lawyer-like keenness pointed out the irregularity of the prosecution under a new Act, as the Bond of Association was, which gave her no precedent for her defence. Pertinently she asked why Babington had been hurried to his death instead of being brought forward to give evidence on this occasion, and why Nau and Curle, whose evidence was quoted against her, and who were still alive, were not confronted with her. She was in a manner as inconsequent as her judges, but it was of set purpose. She had now such a chance of speaking out as she had not had since the prison gates had closed on her at Carlisle. Passionately, though never recklessly, she was concerned to justify her whole career to her own generation and to posterity. On the subject of her religion, she spoke burning words, which have been treasured up in the memory of Catholics for ever. When she was interrupted, she broke off; when the interruption was over, she took up the thread of her own speech. In intellect and tactical skill she was equal to anyone there. She made Walsingham wince by a pertinent reference to the methods of forgery. On the second day the parody of justice was maintained with a greater show of decency. Burghley alone put the questions. Mary, deathly pale, but even more dignified than on the previous day, showed no flinching. Her brain was clear and her tongue ready, but, as she had assured the commission, she was judged in advance. Suddenly, on this second day, Burghley announced that Elizabeth had suspended the sitting and the commission would

meet again on the 25th of October, in the Star Chamber. Mary took leave of the chief commissioners with a few easy words, and let fall a half-contemptuous sentence of indulgence as she passed the lawyers. Finally, she declared that she left her cause in the hands of God, and withdrew. Fotheringay was soon deserted by its unaccustomed visitors, and Mary was left to await her doom in prayer and watching.

It is abominable to reflect that Paulet should have intruded his insults upon her. The day after the dispersion of the commission he ordered the dais under which Mary used to sit to be removed. Always easy and condescending in her manner to her inferiors, Mary held precious her royal rank, and the dais had been with her a scrupulous piece of etiquette. Paulet had had no authorization for this denial of her rank, and on the second day repenting of it, he went surlily to inform Mary that on preferring a request to the queen she could have her dais back. Mary in answer merely pointed to the wall where it had been replaced by a crucifix. Paulet must have felt that he had been put hopelessly in the wrong, but Mary's conduct in this matter is significant of the plane on which she lived, at least in these last weeks of a life which had been so filled with passion.

On the 20th of November the message came that the verdict had gone against her, and she was warned to prepare for death. An Act of Parliament had confirmed the verdict, and the lords and commissioners petitioned Elizabeth to proceed to the utmost rigour of the law. This Elizabeth was loth to do, and for more than two months Mary was kept in suspense. The French king sent a special ambassador to plead for her, but at this point Elizabeth could afford to defy France. Her chief desire was that someone should rid her of

Mary without compromising her; and her secretary, Davison, at her instigation, wrote to Paulet suggesting that he should assassinate his prisoner in accordance with the queen's desires, knowing her indisposition to shed blood. This was too much for "her Amyas." He had appreciated the almost delirious letter of gratitude she had written to him after the arrest of Nau and Curle. He had shown his patriotism by vulgar and brutal insult to his prisoner, but murder did not come within his range. He was sincerely shocked, and his reply was in a dignified and reproachful strain that could hardly have been acceptable to Elizabeth. She had signed the warrant before suggesting Davison's letter, and now there was nothing to be done but to proceed with the execution.

Mary had spent the first two days after hearing the verdict in November in writing her farewells. She wrote to Elizabeth blessing God that the end of her weariness had come, and asking that her servants might be allowed to carry her body to France and bury it beside her mother at Rheims, "so that this poor body of mine may find at last that rest it never found as long as it was joined to my soul." To her cousin of Guise she wrote assuring him that though she was the first of their house to die by the executioner's axe, it was no disgrace, for it was by the hands of heretics, and her end would be "worthy of our house." She knew her own courage too well to fear any faltering at the last. Some time after she wrote to Elizabeth requesting that her account books taken from Chartley might be restored, that she might settle her affairs, and that she might have the ministrations of her chaplain. This latter part of her request was granted to her. She made her peace with God according to Catholic rites, but was

not allowed to communicate with her chaplain again, except in writing, even at the last.

On the 8th of February, as Mary lay ill in bed, Lord Shrewsbury and the Duke of Kent arrived with the warrant for her execution on the morrow. Mary received them sitting on a couch at the foot of her bed. She listened to their message with an air of smiling cheerfulness, declaring that the joys of heaven were worth the pain of a moment. The spirit was undaunted, but there was a natural shuddering of the flesh and in the end a burst of weeping shook her. But she soon recovered and prepared to fill the few hours of life left to her with letters of farewell and with the ordering of what legacies she could still bequeath. All through her life Mary had been solicitous for the welfare of her friends and servants with that attention to detail which betokens real interest. It is perhaps the best testimony to her lovable qualities that it was those who stood nearest to her who loved her most. On this last night she remembered all. In her will she described certain pensions which were to be paid. To Henry III. of France she recommended her servants. The money left to her she divided and tied up in little bags, each marked with the name of the one to whom she wished it to be given. When all was done, she had, as usual, a spiritual book read by one of her ladies. On this night she bade Jean Kennedy read the life of the penitent thief, and afterwards she prayed that God would have mercy likewise on her an even greater sinner. In compliance with the advice of her ladies, she lay with closed eyes on her bed but fully dressed. Her face was calm and pale, and so irradiated with some emotion that those around thought they had never seen her look so beautiful. They divined that she was silently praying.

At six o'clock she rose, and bidding them wash her feet she made her last toilet and took a little bread and wine which Bourgoign brought her. Her dress was that of a queen dowager, sober but rich. She wore a black satin petticoat and bodice over a crimson under-dress, with a head-dress of white crêpe and a veil of the same material. She was at prayer with her servants when a knock on her locked door warned her that her hour had come. She continued to pray, but the door was opened at the second knock, and, supported because of her weakness by two men-at-arms, Mary descended the staircase. One of her servants carried a crucifix before her, the rest followed; but her women were not to be admitted to the scaffold. On the queen's giving her word, however, for their self-control, two, Elizabeth Curle and Jean Kennedy, were allowed to stay with her to the end. The great hall was draped in black as well as the scaffold where the masked executioners waited. The queen took her place, always composed, though a little flushed and with eyes shining as with some immense excitement suppressed. Elizabeth's commission was read, and the Dean of Peterborough approached to exhort her, but she stopped him with the words that she was settled in the ancient Catholic religion. When he persisted, Shrewsbury bade him desist. (It was a malicious stroke of Elizabeth's to make Mary's reluctant and indulgent ex-gaoler preside over her execution.) The Dean then prayed for her repentance, and the confusion of the queen's enemies, in which the company present joined. Mary repeated aloud in Latin the penitential psalms the while. She had hoped for the ministrations of her chaplain, but these had been denied her. She continued praying when the company had fallen silent, fixing her eyes

on the crucifix she held. When the executioner approached to remove her upper clothing she put him aside, whimsically remarking that she was not accustomed to such a groom of the chamber, and beckoning to her ladies, who, weeping, did the service for her, she put her finger on their lips, exhorting them "Remember, I promised for you." In the crimson and white of her under-dress she was still a queenly figure. They tied a handkerchief over her eyes, and she seated herself to receive, as she expected, death by the sword, after the French fashion; but she was guided to the block, still praying and without a sign of shrinking. At the third blow her head was severed from her body, and, in the savage fashion of the time, held up for the execration of the three hundred spectators. It was greeted with silence; the head-dress fell from the gracious head and showed it whitened before its time. The features had contracted in the agony of death and the lips still moved. The women were refused the consolation of performing the last offices for the body of the mistress whom they had so much loved. Everything that had been used by her at the last was immediately burnt at the fire in the hall, even the drapery, lest they should be carried away as relics. A little dog which had crept in beneath her skirts, and, pitifully whining, got dabbled with blood, was carried away to be washed. The news was borne as fast as horse could gallop to the English court, where Elizabeth made show of anger. Europe was startled for a moment and angry; but France could not substantiate her threats. Philip's long-meditated revenge was perhaps more zealously prepared in view of Mary's demission of her claims to him. James of Scotland was pensive for a day and forewent his supper. In

spite of her pleadings for a French funeral, Mary was laid to rest beside another victim of the Tudors, Catherine of Aragon, in Peterborough Cathedral, whence James, as King of England, removed her body to Westminster, to lie still less appropriately beside Elizabeth. But the memory of Mary Stewart needed no monuments. Men have loved and hated her dead as did those of her own generation. It has been said by a recent biographer that praise and blame in the strict sense are not applicable to her career; but this is to make her too much the puppet of what was indeed a singularly inexorable fate. Mary Stewart was too vital a being to be disposed of thus. The standards by which we measure her are not of our own time, but if we do not blame it is because we love and reverence and are fascinated by her wonderfully strong and gracious personality.

“ ‘Some faults the gods will give,’ to fetter
Man’s highest intent :
But surely you were something better
Than Innocent ! ”

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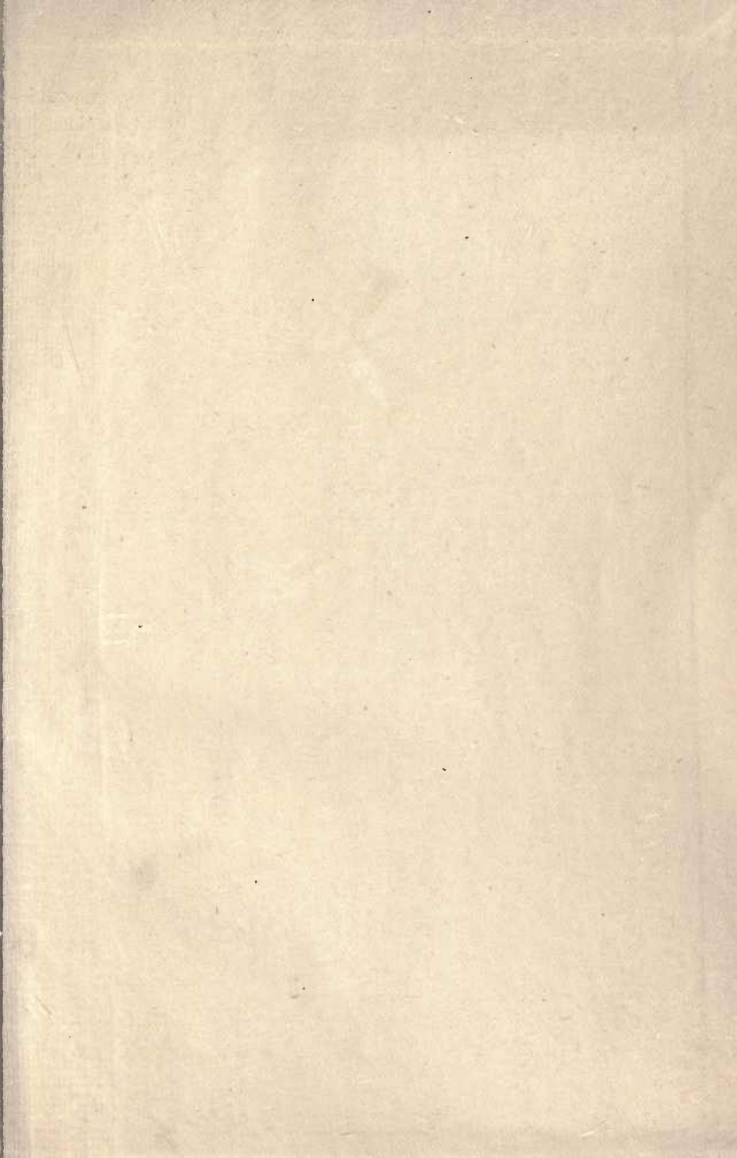
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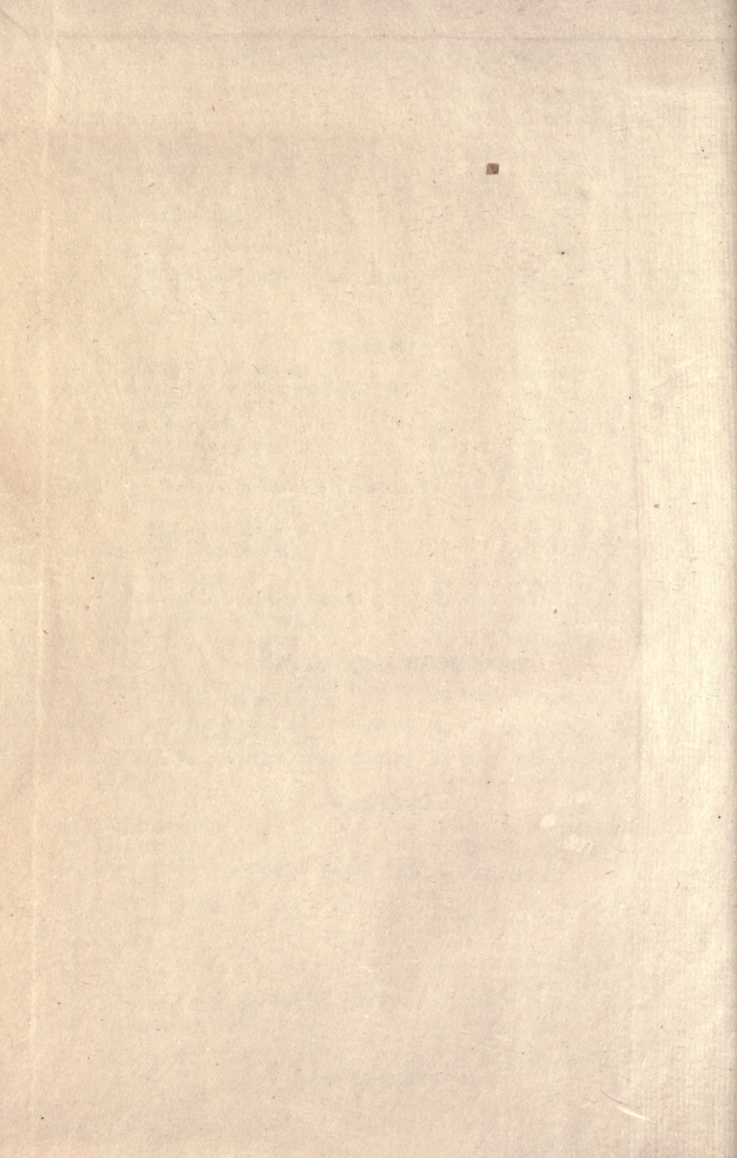
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